COTTON MATHER

AND

SALEM WITCHCRAFT.

BY

WILLIAM FREDERICK POOLE.

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COTTON MATHER AND SALEM WITCHCRAFT.

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1. *The Mather Papers. Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society.* Vol. VIII. Fourth Series. Boston: Wiggin and Lunt. 1868. 8vo.
2. *Salem Witchcraft; with an Account of Salem Village, and a History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Subjects.* By CHARLES W. UPHAM. Boston: Wiggin and Lunt. 1867. 2 vols. 8vo.
3. *The New England Tragedies.* I. *John Endicott.* II. *Giles Corey of the Salem Farms.* By HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW. Boston: Ticknor and Fields. 1868. 12mo.
4. *The New England Tragedies in Prose.* I. *The Coming of the Quakers.* II. *The Witchcraft Delusion.* By ROWLAND H. ALLEN. Boston: Nichols and Noyes. 1869. 12mo.
5. *The Edinburgh Review*, July, 1868. No. CCLXI. Art. I. *Salem Witchcraft.*

NEARLY two centuries have passed away since the saddest tragedy of early New England history was enacted at Salem and Salem Village. Instead of fading out from the memory of men, the incidents of Salem Witchcraft are receiving more attention to-day than at any former period. The fact of its being the last great exhibition of a superstition which had cursed humanity for thousands of years, and that every incident connected with it has been preserved in the form of record, deposition, or narrative, imparts to it a peculiar interest, and one which will be permanent. It is not as a record of horrors, but as a field of psychological study, that the sub-

ject will retain its hold on the minds of men. More victims than suffered at Salem were hurried to the gallows by witchcraft, year after year, in a single county of England, during the seventeenth century; but the details of English trials, then so common, were generally not thought worth preserving. Probably as much authentic and reliable information respecting the Salem proceedings is extant as of the trials of the thirty thousand victims who suffered from the same cause in England. How did the Salem delusion originate? Who was responsible for it? Was it wholly the result of fraud and deception, or were there psychological phenomena attending it which have never been explained? Is there any resemblance between the proceedings of the "afflicted children" of Salem Village and modern spiritual manifestations? Were the clergy of New England, or any other profession or class in the community, especially implicated in it? Any one of these questions affords a theme for discussion. We propose, however, to review the incidents of this fearful tragedy for the purpose of re-examining the historical evidence on which, in the popular estimation, so large a portion of the culpability for those executions has been laid upon one individual.

In 1831 Mr. Upham printed his "Lectures on Salem Witchcraft," in which he brought some very grave charges against Cotton Mather, as being the contriver, instigator, and promoter of the delusion, and the chief conspirator against the lives of the sufferers. These charges have been repeated by Mr. Quincy in his "History of Harvard University," by Mr. Peabody in his "Life of Cotton Mather," by Mr. Bancroft, and by nearly all historical writers since that date. Mr. Upham, after an interval of thirty-six years, has reiterated and emphasized his original accusations, in his elaborate "History of Salem Witchcraft," printed in 1867. They have obtained a lodgement in all the minor and school histories; and the present generation of youth is taught that nineteen innocent persons were hanged, and one was pressed to death, to gratify the vanity, ambition, and stolid credulity of Mr. Cotton Mather.

If any one imagines that we are stating the case too strongly,

let him try an experiment on the first bright boy he meets by asking, "Who got up Salem Witchcraft?" and, with a promptness that will startle him, he will receive the reply, "Cotton Mather." Let him try another boy with the quesion, "Who was Cotton Mather?" and the answer will come, "The man who was on horseback, and hung witches." An examination of the historical text-books used in our schools will show where these ideas originated. We have the latest editions of a dozen such manuals before us; but the following examples must suffice.

"Cotton Mather, an eccentric, but influential minister, took up the matter, and great excitement spread through the colony. Among those hanged was a minister named Burroughs, who had denounced the proceedings of Mather and his associates. At his execution Mather appeared among the crowd on horseback, and quieted the people with quotations from Scripture. Mather gloried in these judicial murders." — QUACKENBOS'S *School History of the United States*, 1868, pp. 138 – 140.

"Cotton Mather and other popular men wrote in its defence. Calef, a citizen of Boston, exposed Mather's credulity, and greatly irritated the minister. Mather called Calef a 'weaver turned minister,' a 'coal from hell,' and prosecuted him for slander." — LOSSING'S *Pictorial History of the United States*, 1868, p. 106.

"Most of those who participated as prosecutors in the unrighteous work confessed their error; still there were some, the most prominent of whom was Cotton Mather, who defended their course to the last." — ANDERSON'S *School History of the United States*, 1868, p. 57.

"The new authorities, under the influence of the clergy, of whom, in this particular, Cotton Mather was the leader, pursued a course which placed the accused in situations where they had need to be magicians not to be convicted of magic. Malice and revenge carried on the work which superstition began." — EMMA WILLARD'S *History of the United States*, 1868, p. 100.

We give two other extracts from more elaborate works.

"New England, at that time [1692], was unfortunate in having among her ministers a pedantic, painstaking, self-complacent, ill-balanced man called Cotton Mather; his great industry and verbal learning gave him undue currency, and his writings were much read. He was indefatigable in magnifying himself and his office. In an age

when light reading consisted of polemic pamphlets, it is easy to see that his stories of 'Margaret Rule's dire Afflictions' would find favor, and prepare the public mind for a stretch of credulity almost equal to his own."* — ELLIOTT'S *New England History*, 1867, Vol. II. p. 43.

"He incurred the responsibility of being its chief cause and promoter. In the progress of the superstitious fear, which amounted to frenzy, and could only be satisfied with blood, he neither blenched nor halted; but attended the courts, watched the progress of invisible agency in the prisons, and joined the multitude in witnessing the executions." — QUINCY'S *History of Harvard University*, Vol. I. p. 63.

Mr. Bancroft adopts substantially the views of Mr. Upham. Cotton Mather's "boundless vanity gloried in the assaults of evil angels upon the country."† "To cover his own confusion, he got up a case of witchcraft in his own parish. Was Cotton Mather honestly credulous? He is an example how far selfishness, under the form of vanity and ambition, can blind the higher faculties, stupefy the judgment, and dupe consciousness itself."‡ But we need not pause over Mr. Bancroft's second-hand and rhetorical statements.

Mr. Hildreth gave some attention to the original authorities, and saw that the wild assertions of Mr. Upham and Mr. Bancroft were untenable. It is to be regretted, that, with his candid and impartial methods of study, he did not go far enough to reach the whole truth. He says: § "The suggestion, that Cotton Mather, for purposes of his own, deliberately got up this witchcraft delusion, and forced it upon a doubtful and hesitating people, is utterly absurd. Mather's position, convictions, and temperament alike called him to serve, on this occasion, as the organ, exponent, and stimulator of the popular faith."

These views respecting Mr. Mather's connection with the Salem trials are to be found in no publication of a date prior to 1831, when Mr. Upham's "Lectures" were published.

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* Mr. Elliott's authority for Margaret Rule's dire afflictions, which occurred late in 1693, is Mather's "Memorable Providences," printed in 1689! How those afflictions should have prepared the public mind for the Salem delusion of 1692 the historian does not explain.

† Hist. U. States, Vol. III. p. 85.

‡ Ibid. p. 97.

§ Hist. U. States, Vol. II. pp. 151, 152.

The clergy of New England, indeed, soon after the delusion abated, and subsequently, had been blamed for fostering the excitement; and Increase Mather and Cotton Mather, father and son, being the most prominent clergymen in the colony, — both stanch believers in the reality of witchcraft, and writers on the subject, — were criticised more freely than any others. But these charges were very different from those we are to consider. Mr. Upham, in the Appendix to his second edition, printed in 1832, sets forth and maintains for his opinions the claim of originality, to which he is entitled. The accuracy of his statements respecting Mr. Mather's character had been questioned. Mr. Upham, in his reply, admits, that, previously to the investigation of the subject of his Lectures, "a shadow of a doubt had never been suggested respecting Mr. Mather's moral and Christian character." He adds: "It was with the greatest reluctance that such a doubt was permitted to enter my mind. It seemed incredible — nay, almost impossible — that a man who had been at the head of all the great religious operations of his day, who had been the instrument of so many apparent conversions, and who devoted so many hours and days and weeks of his life to fasting and prayer, could in reality be dishonest and corrupt. But when the evidence of the case required me to believe, that, in the transactions which I had undertaken to relate, his character did actually appear in this dark and disgraceful light, a regard for truth and justice compelled me to express my convictions." *

In this discussion we shall treat Mr. Upham's Lectures and History in the same connection, as the latter is an expansion and defence of the views presented in the former. In the History Cotton Mather appears more frequently and in a more unfavorable light than in the Lectures, and many of the allusions to him are not referred to in the Index. He comes in when we should least expect him, and always with evil purpose, — plotting and counter-plotting, — disappointed when the trials were over, — planning new excitement and other trials in Boston, — unrepentant when every-

* Lectures, p. 284.

body else had taken to the confessional, — wrecked in reputation almost before his career had commenced, — and going to his grave full of remorse and disappointment.

Mr. Upham is never at a loss to know what Mr. Mather "contemplated" on any occasion, — what "he longed for," — what "he would have been glad to have," — what "he looked upon with secret pleasure," — and what "he was secretly and cunningly endeavoring" to do. Mr. Peabody also knows when "Cotton Mather was in his element," and what "he enjoyed the great felicity of." We do not hope to follow these writers into the dark recesses of Mr. Mather's mind; but in the course of this investigation we shall take up some of their statements and examine them in the light of evidence that may be regarded as historical.

A few words touching the wide-spread belief in witchcraft prevalent in the seventeenth century may prepare some of our readers better to appreciate the events which are more particularly to come under our notice.

No nation, no age, no form of religion or irreligion, may claim an immunity from this superstition. The Reformers were as zealous in this matter as the Catholics. It is estimated that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries two hundred thousand persons were executed, mostly burned, in Europe, — Germany furnishing one half of the victims, and England thirty thousand. Statutes against witchcraft were enacted in the reigns of Henry VI., Henry VIII., Elizabeth, and James I. Learning and religion were no safeguards against this delusion.

The "Familiar Letters" of James Howell, who, after the restoration of Charles II., was "Historiographer Royal," gives a frightful picture of the extent of the delusion in England. Under date of February 3, 1646, he writes: "We have multitudes of witches among us; for in Essex and Suffolk there were above two hundred indicted within these two years, and above the one half of them executed. I speak it with horror. God guard us from the Devil!" * Again, February 20, 1647: "Within the compass of two years, near upon three hundred

* Page 386, Edition of 1673.

witches were arraigned, and the major part of them executed, in Essex and Suffolk only. Scotland swarms with them now more than ever, and persons of good quality are executed daily."*

A general history of the witchcraft delusion and trials in England is a desideratum which we commend to the attention of English antiquaries. It would show that no New England man has any occasion to apologize for the credulity and superstition of his ancestors in the presence of an Englishman.

In New England, the earliest witch execution of which any details have been preserved was that of Margaret Jones, of Charlestown, in June, 1648. Governor Winthrop presided at the trial, signed the death-warrant, and wrote the report of the case in his journal. No indictment, process, or other evidence in the case can be found, unless it be an order of the General Court of May 10, 1648, that, after the course taken in England for the discovery of witches, a certain woman, not named, and her husband, be confined and watched.† We give Governor Winthrop's record in full, with the exception of such parts as cannot be printed.

"June 4, 1648. At this court one Margaret Jones, of Charlestown, was indicted and found guilty of witchcraft, and hanged for it. The evidence against her was:—

"1. That she was found to have a malignant touch, as many persons (men, women, and children), whom she stroked or touched with any affection or displeasure, were taken with deafness, or vomiting, or other violent pains or sickness.

"2. She practising physic, and her medicines being such things as (by her own confession) were harmless, as anise-seed, liquors, etc., yet had extraordinary violent effect.

"3. She would use to tell such as would not make use of her physic that they would never be healed; and accordingly their diseases and hurts continued, with relapse, against the ordinary course, and beyond the apprehension of all physicians and surgeons.

"4. Some things which she foretold came to pass accordingly; other things she could tell of (as secret speeches, etc.) which she had no ordinary means to come to the knowledge of.

* Page 427.

† Mass. Rec., Vol. II. p. 242.

"5. [Omitted.]

"6. . . . The like child was seen in two other places, to which she had relation; and one maid saw it, fell sick upon it, and was cured by the said Margaret, who used means to be employed to that end. Her behavior at her trial was very intemperate, lying notoriously, and railing upon the jury and witnesses, and in the like distemper she died. *The same day and hour she was executed there was a very great tempest at Connecticut, which blew down many trees, etc.*" — *Journal*, Vol. II. p. 326.

We are soon to consider the credulity and superstition of Cotton Mather, and desire here to call attention to the not entire absence of these qualities in the staid and judicious Winthrop, the founder of the Massachusetts Colony. The facts in relation to Margaret Jones seem to be, that she was a strong-minded woman, with a will of her own, and undertook, with simple remedies, to practise as a female physician. Were she living in our day, she would brandish a diploma of M. D. from the New England Female Medical College, would annually refuse to pay her city taxes unless she had the right to vote, and would make speeches at the meetings of the Universal Suffrage Association. Her touch seemed to be attended with mesmeric powers. Her character and abilities rather commend themselves to our respect. She made anise-seed and good liquors do the work of huge doses of calomel and Epsom salts, or their equivalents. Her predictions as to the termination of cases treated in the heroic method proved to be true. Who knows but that she practised homœopathy? The regulars pounced upon her as a witch, as the monks did upon Faustus for printing the first edition of the Bible, — put her and her husband into jail, — set rude men to watch her day and night, — subjected her person to indignities unmentionable, — and, with the assistance of Winthrop and the magistrates, hanged her, — and all this only fifteen years before Cotton Mather, the credulous, was born!

Mary Johnson was executed the same year in Hartford. Mary Parsons was tried in 1651, and again in 1674; her husband, Hugh Parsons, was tried in 1652. In 1651 two persons were tried in Hartford. In 1653 Goodwife Knap was hanged at Fairfield, Conn. In 1656 Mrs. Ann Hibbins, the widow of

an eminent Boston merchant and magistrate, was hanged. Hutchinson* says, three witches were condemned at Hartford January 20, 1662–63. "After one of the witches was hanged, the maid was well!" Cotton Mather was born twenty-three days after this date. A woman named Greensmith was hanged at Hartford in 1663. Elizabeth Segur was condemned at Hartford in 1665, and Katharine Harrison at Wethersfield in 1669. The water test, so successfully applied by Matthew Hopkins in England, by which he caused the death of one hundred persons in Essex, Norfolk, and Suffolk from 1645 to 1647, was tried in Connecticut. The method was, to tie the thumb of the right hand to the great toe of the left foot, and draw the victims through a horse-pond. If they floated, they were witches; if they sank, they were in all likelihood drowned. The account of these Connecticut women is, that they "swam like a cork."

In 1670 Mary Webster, of Hadley, was examined at Northampton, sent to Boston, and acquitted. On her return to Hadley, a mob of young men dragged her out of her house, hung her up till she was almost dead, let her down, rolled her in the snow, and left her. A similar scene was enacted at Great Paxton, a village within sixty miles of London, in the year 1808, on a poor woman named Ann Izard, accused of bewitching three girls.

From 1652 to the time of the great outbreak in Salem the courts of Essex County in Massachusetts were constantly investigating alleged cases of witchcraft. John Godfrey, of Andover, was cried out upon in 1659. One witness swore, that, six or seven years before, being in the first seat in the gallery of the meeting-house in Rowley, he did see in the second seat one whom he believed was John Godfrey, yawning; and while opening his mouth, so yawning, did see a small teat under his tongue. In 1669 there was another case of a female physician charged with witchcraft by a regular practitioner. Goody Burt, a widow, was accused by Philip Reed, physician, of producing cures which could be accounted for by no natural cause. She practised in Salem, Lynn, and Marblehead. In 1679 the family of William Morse, of Newbury, was disturbed in a

* Hist. of Mass., Vol. II. p. 23, Salem Edition, 1795.

strange manner. The case gave rise to many examinations and much evidence.

Mr. Peabody says:* "After the execution of Mrs. Hibbins in 1655 [1656] the taste for such scenes had abated, and it was not till Cotton Mather, in 1685, published an account of several cases of witchcraft,† that such fears and fancies revived." But, though we have given only an incomplete sketch of the early witch proceedings in New England, it is enough to show that the colonies were in a constant ferment, from supposed diabolical agency, for more than forty years before 1692. In every community there were suspicions and accusations which never came to a public examination. The same disturbance had existed to a still greater extent in England and throughout Europe. With persons actuated simply by malice, the easiest method of annoying a neighbor, or of ridding a community of a pestilent old woman, was by setting on foot a charge of witchcraft against them. English books relating to this subject were very numerous, and constituted the light reading of the day. Everybody knew how a witch ought to behave; and some of their pranks afforded young people of unregenerate minds agreeable recreation after their unsavory tasks over the Cambridge Platform and the Westminster Confession of Faith. Hutchinson says of these books: —

"Not many years before [1681], Glanvil published his Witch Stories in England; Perkins and other Nonconformists were earlier; but the great authority was that of Sir Matthew Hale, revered in New England, not only for his knowledge of law, but for his gravity and piety. The trial of the witches in Suffolk was published in 1684. All these books were in New England; and the conformity between the behavior of Goodwin's children and most of the supposed bewitched at Salem and the behavior of those in England is so exact as to leave no room to doubt the stories had been read by the New England persons themselves, or had been told to them by others who had read them. Indeed, this conformity, instead of giving suspicion, was urged in confirmation of the truth of both: the Old England demons and the New being so much alike. The Court justified themselves from books of law,

* Life of Mather, p. 281.

† It is to be regretted that Mr. Peabody did not give the title of this publication of Mr. Mather's in 1685, for it is one we have never seen or heard of.

and the authorities of Keble, Dalton, and other lawyers then of the first character, who lay down rules of conviction as absurd and dangerous as any which were practised in New England." — *Hist. of Mass.*, Vol. II. p. 27.

One who has never examined this point would be surprised at the number of witch books printed in England from the accession of James I. in 1603 to the deposition of James II. in 1688. Some one has said, with more wit than historical accuracy, that "Witchcraft and Kingcraft came in and went out with the Stuarts." Among their authors and sponsors were some of the most eminent men of the kingdom, — Richard Baxter, Sir Thomas Browne, Sir Matthew Hale, Robert Boyle, Joseph Glanvil, John Gaule, William Perkins, and Richard Bernard. These names were constantly quoted at the trials, and in the writings of that period.

The writings of Gaule, Perkins, and Bernard, though adopting in full the popular theory of diabolical agency, had a beneficial influence in mitigating the evils of the delusion. They defined the kind of evidence necessary to convict a witch. They declared against the admission of "spectral testimony." They proved that the Devil often, for his own wicked purposes, performed his deeds of darkness through the agency of innocent and virtuous persons. This theory was an immense advance on the one maintained at the trials before Sir Matthew Hale, — that the Devil could employ only the spectres of such persons as were in league with him. The clergy of New England accepted the theory of these writers: the magistrates rejected it, and held to that laid down by Sir Matthew Hale. These two theories were the great questions in debate at that time, and all the evils at Salem grew out of the position taken by the magistrates.

The clergy maintained, and referred to Perkins and Bernard as their authorities, that, in the trial of any alleged case of witchcraft, the question was not whether the accused had done acts which in themselves were preternatural, but whether he or she was a willing agent, — in other words, whether a compact had been made with Satan. The compact must not be assumed; it must be proved by legal evidence. But how, on such a theory, could a case of witchcraft be proved? No

spectral evidence must be admitted; for spectral evidence is the "Devil's testimony," who is a liar from the beginning. The evidence of a confessed witch must also be excluded. The evidence must be strictly *human*, — that is, what a person, in the use of his ordinary faculties, and in their ordinary operation, has seen or known, without any supernatural or preternatural assistance, either from God or the Devil. A person confessing himself to be a witch thereby acknowledges that he has renounced God and Jesus Christ, and has entered into the service of the Evil One. How can a person so confessing take a legal oath, or, in any respect, be a competent witness? These writers assert that a trial for witchcraft must be conducted by the same rules of law as a trial for murder or burglary. The testimony of a person who admitted that he had entered into a league with the Devil to work all manner of wickedness would not be received in a case of petty larceny. Why, then, should it be accepted in a case of witchcraft, which is a capital offence? They claim that the rules of a trial for witchcraft, if they vary from those in other capital charges, should be even more rigid; because we are dealing with something of which we know but little, except that it is the greatest of crimes, and that the Devil is mixed up in the affair in some unaccountable way, and will cheat us, if he can.

How, then, inquired their opponents, can a witch be convicted? No one ever saw the Devil make a contract with a man, or a witch "sign his book." If these rules of evidence are observed, the witches will all escape punishment. — God forbid! these judicious writers replied. But that is not your affair, nor ours. If we try them, it must be by the rules of justice and the laws of England; otherwise, we are "playing blind-man's-buff with the Devil in the dark," and we shall surely get the worst of it. We shall put to death innocent persons, and may suffer the same penalty ourselves, which we shall richly deserve, if we try, convict, and execute the accused by illegal methods.

They went so far as to question the validity of a confession. The case must be inquired into. Was the person who confessed in his right mind? Had no diabolical agency been exerted upon him? Had he not been influenced by promises or threats "to sign the book"? If not in his right mind, or if

he had been influenced by the Devil, the confession was to be set aside, the plea of "Not guilty" entered, and the case disposed of as if there had been no confession. If otherwise, and if he had done acts clearly of a diabolical nature, he was, in the eye of the law, guilty of witchcraft; and the best disposition to make of such a person was to hang him. If then there was any mistake about it, the penalty was upon his own head for such unpardonable lying.

On such reasoning it will readily be seen that witch trials would be very infrequent and very harmless affairs. And yet these writers, judged by our modern standards, were very credulous and superstitious persons. The narrative we have quoted from Winthrop's Journal would not have seemed to them absurd or revolting. No intelligent person in those times rejected the theory of diabolical agency, unless he rejected also the authority of the Old and New Testaments, the existence of angels, and a life beyond the grave. A belief in witchcraft was essential to the maintenance of a Christian character. To express any doubts on the subject was to lay one's self open to denunciation as a Sadducee, — a term of reproach which has lost the significance it then had.

No one within the pale of the Christian Church had then written or spoken against the reality of witchcraft. By taking an individual of a past generation out of his relations with his own times, and putting him upon the background of modern civilization and refinement, and then reproaching him with opinions and practices now shown to be erroneous, but which he shared in common with all his contemporaries, it is very easy to make any character appear ridiculous, and even culpable. But this is not the historical method of dealing with the reputations of men of a former age. We of the present shall need a more charitable interpretation of our own opinions and acts on the part of those who follow us. Did the man act well his part with the light he had? Did he, in a time of intense excitement, when life and reputation were at stake, act with reference to his duty to God, and in charity to his fellow-men?

We have set forth with some minuteness the theories of such writers as Perkins and Bernard, because we are to meet these

names as authorities in the progress of our investigation. When the Governor and Council asked the advice of the clergy of Boston and the vicinity, in June, 1692, those ministers advised — and Cotton Mather drew up the advice — that "there is need of very critical and exquisite caution," and recommended "that the directions given by such judicious writers as Perkins and Bernard may be observed." Both the Mathers adopted the theory of these writers, and frequently made references to, and quotations from them. But we shall recur to this matter in another connection.

We now come to consider the first case of witchcraft in which Cotton Mather was concerned, and of which Mr. Upham says,* "there is reason to believe that it originated the delusion in Salem." As the case is one of much importance, we shall allow Governor Hutchinson, who knew some of the parties concerned, and had conversed with others who were eye-witnesses, to relate the main incidents.

"In 1688 began a more alarming instance than any which had preceded it. Four of the children of John Goodwin, a grave man and a good liver at the north part of Boston, were generally believed to be bewitched. I have often heard persons who were of the neighborhood speak of the great consternation it occasioned. The children were all remarkable for ingenuity of temper, had been religiously educated, and were thought to be without guile. The eldest was a girl of thirteen or fourteen years. She had charged a laundress [one Glover] with taking away some of the family linen. The mother of the laundress was one of the wild Irish, of bad character, and gave the girl harsh language, soon after which she fell into fits, which were said to have something diabolical in them. One of her sisters and two brothers followed her example, and, it is said, were tormented in the same part of their bodies, at the same time, although kept in separate apartments, and ignorant of each other's complaint. Sometimes they would be deaf, then dumb, then blind; and sometimes all these disorders together would come upon them. Their tongues would be drawn down their throats, then pulled out upon their chins. Their jaws, necks, shoulders, elbows, and all their joints, would appear to be dislocated, and they would make most piteous outcries of burnings, of being cut with knives, beat, etc., and the marks of wounds were afterwards to be seen. The ministers of Boston and Charlestown kept a day of fasting

* History, Vol. I. p. 459.

and prayer at the troubled house, after which the youngest child made no more complaints. The others persevered, and the magistrates then interposed, and the old woman was apprehended; but, upon examination, would neither confess nor deny, and appeared to be disordered in her senses. Upon the report of physicians that she was *compos mentis*, she was executed, declaring at her death the children should not be relieved. The eldest, after this, was taken into a minister's [Mr. Mather's] family, where at first she behaved orderly, but after some time fell into her fits. The account of her affliction is in print [Mather's "Memorable Providences," 1689]; some things are mentioned as extraordinary, which tumblers are taught every day to perform; others are more natural; but it was a time of great credulity." — *Hist. of Mass.*, Vol. II. pp. 24–26.

In his Lectures, 1831, which have given the cue to all subsequent writers, Mr. Upham states, as an historical fact, that the Goodwin case "was brought about by his [Cotton Mather's] management." * Now if Mr. Upham had not read the little evidence there is in this case, he was chargeable with a negligence and recklessness of statement which we do not like to characterize, in thus assailing the reputation of a member of his own profession, who was not living to make answer. If he had read the evidence, —— but the case is not a supposable one: no one who knows Mr. Upham will for a moment imagine that he would consciously make a misstatement, or suppress any evidence which he deemed essential to a proper estimate of a character of which he was treating. We think it proper to make this explicit avowal here, for we shall often have occasion to question his facts and scrutinize his authorities, as well as challenge his reasoning. There is no more unsafe and perilous task than the writing of history with a theory to maintain. If a preconceived opinion be strong and active, it must be controlled by no common love of truth and justice, not to render the person holding it disqualified even for the examination of authorities. Everything which comes under his eye only strengthens his opinion. The case seems to him so plain that he considers it unnecessary to look up rare and forgotten pamphlets, and pore over musty manuscripts in the obscure chirography of two centuries ago, for

* Lectures, p. 107.

the purpose of verifying a date, or explaining the motives of a person on whom he is to pass judgment.

Mr. Upham can never have seen "Some Few Remarks upon a Scandalous Book by one Robert Calef," Boston, 1701, which was written by the parishioners of the Second Boston Church, as a reply to Calef's charges against Mr. Mather; neither can he have seen "Some Miscellany Observations on the Present Debates respecting Witchcrafts," 1692, nor Increase Mather's "Cases of Conscience concerning Witchcrafts," 1693; for, if he had seen these very important tracts, he would, with his integrity of purpose, have quoted from them the evidence to upset his whole theory. But he has read Cotton Mather's Diary, which is full of penitential confessions, and acknowledgments to himself and his Maker of manifold transgressions, — of pride, vanity, hardness of heart, imprudent zeal, and unworthiness in his Master's service. These confessions Mr. Upham regards as historical evidence. Such a use of the confessional, we believe, is not common with historical writers. Before such a touchstone any devout man who keeps a diary will inevitably fall; since, the more devout he is, the more self-depreciatory will be his confessions. Under this test the Apostle to the Gentiles himself becomes "the chief of sinners."

No historian has a moral right to assail the character of a man who bore a good reputation in his day, without an exhaustive and candid examination of authorities. Such an examination we shall show that Mr. Upham has not made in the case of Cotton Mather, and that he has used the facts which have come under his observation with a strong bias against Mr. Mather as a man of integrity and veracity. Mr. Upham does not bring a particle of evidence or quote a single authority in proof of his allegation that the Goodwin case "was brought about by Cotton Mather's management," — an allegation which he accompanies by others equally unsupported. He says: —

"Dr. Cotton Mather aspired to be considered the great champion of the Church, and the most successful combatant against the Prince of the Power of the Air. He seems to have longed for an opportunity to signalize himself in this particular kind of warfare, and repeatedly en-

deavored to get up a delusion of this kind in Boston. An instance of witchcraft was brought about by his management in 1688. There is some ground for suspicion that he was instrumental in causing the delusion in Salem; at any rate, he took a leading part in conducting it." — *Lectures*, pp. 106, 107.

The same statements, in almost the same words, he reproduces in his History.*

Mr. John Goodwin, the father of the afflicted children, told the story of his domestic trials, over his own name, in Mather's "Memorable Providences," 1689, page 46. He describes how the first child was taken, then a second, and, later, two others. Friends were called in, and afterwards physicians; but no relief came. He then says: —

"Now I considering my affliction to be more than ordinary, it did certainly call for more than ordinary prayer. I acquainted Mr. Allen, Mr. Moody, Mr. Willard, and Mr. C. Mather, the four ministers of the town, with it, and Mr. Morton, of Charlestown, earnestly desiring them that they, with some other praying people of God, would meet at my house, and there be earnest with God on the behalf of myself and my children."

Did Mr. Mather have anything to do with the case before he was called in, with four other clergymen, after the affair had been going on for some time, and physicians and sympathizing friends had given no relief? Mr. Upham must show this, or his accusation fails.

Twelve years afterwards, Robert Calef, between whom and Mr. Mather a personal quarrel existed, and many bitter words had passed, published his "More Wonders of the Invisible World," in which he says (p. 152): "Mr. Cotton Mather was the most active and forward of any minister in the country in these [Goodwin] matters, taking home one of the children, and managing such intrigues with that child, and, after, printing such an account of the whole in his "Memorable Providences," as conduced much to the kindling those flames that in Sir William's time threatened the devouring this country." We shall in another place speak of the value to be set upon Calef's statements respecting Mr. Mather. Soon after Calef's

* Vol. II. p. 366.

book appeared, the parishioners of Mr. Mather took up this accusation, and in "Some Few Remarks," 1701, which Mr. Upham has never seen, proved it to be a downright falsehood. One of the seven persons who prepared the reply was John Goodwin, the father of the children. He makes, over his own name, a further statement, which we give entire.

"Let the world be informed, that, when one of my children had been laboring under sad circumstances from the Invisible World for about *a quarter of a year*, I desired the ministers of Boston, with Charlestown, to keep a day of prayer at my house, if so be deliverance might be obtained. Mr. Cotton Mather was the last of the ministers that I spoke to on that occasion, and though, by reason of some necessary business, he could not attend, yet he came to my house in the morning of that day, and tarried about half an hour, and went to prayer with us before any other minister came. *Never before had I the least acquaintance with him.* About two or three months after this, I desired that another day of prayer might be kept by the aforesaid ministers, which accordingly they did, and Mr. Cotton Mather was then present. But he never gave me the least advice, neither face to face nor by way of epistles, neither directly nor indirectly; but the motion of going to the authority was made to me by a minister of a neighboring town, now departed;* and matters were managed by me, in prosecution of the supposed criminal, wholly without the advice of any minister or lawyer, or any other person. The ministers would now and then come to visit my distressed family, and pray with and for them, among which Mr. Cotton Mather would now and then come, and go to prayer with us. Yet all that time he never advised me to anything concerning the law, or trial of the accused person; but after that wicked woman had been condemned about a fortnight, Mr. Cotton Mather invited one of my children to his house; and within a day or two after that the woman was executed."

"JOHN GOODWIN."

The writers of "Some Few Remarks" then say: —

"Now behold how active and forward Mr. Mather was in transacting the affairs relating to this woman, and be astonished that ever any one should go to insinuate such things to the world as are known by most that ever heard of those afflicted children to be so far different from the truth."

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* Probably Mr. John Baily, of Watertown, who died December, 1697.

Cotton Mather, according to his custom with all prisoners visited the Glover woman twice after her condemnation, — not in the spirit of an inquisitor, but as a spiritual adviser. She never denied to him the guilt of witchcraft; but as to her confessions about confederacies with the Devil, she only said that she used to be at meetings at which her prince and four more were present. She told him who the four persons were, and as to her prince, "her account plainly was that he was the Devil." Mr. Mather asked her many questions, in reply to which, after a long silence, she said she would fain give full answers, but *they* would not let her. *They?* Who are *they?* She replied, that they were her spirits, or her saints. He advised her to break her covenant with hell. She answered, that he spoke a very reasonable thing, but she could not do it. He offered to pray with her, and asked her to pray for herself. She replied, that she could not, unless her spirits would give her leave. "However," he said, "against her will I prayed with her, which, if it were a fault, *it was in excess of pity.*"

Mr. Mather never revealed the names of the persons whom she, or others, accused; "for," said he,* "we should be very tender in such relation, lest we wrong the reputation of the innocent by stories not enough inquired into." "I cannot resist the conviction," says Mr. Upham,† "that he looked upon the occurrences in the Salem trials with secret pleasure, and would have been glad to have had them repeated in Boston." Why, then, did not Mr. Mather divulge the names of the persons accused by the Glover woman? He had the matter entirely in his own hands, and could have indulged the desire here ascribed to him to his heart's content. But we know he did not manifest such a spirit; and we are forced to inquire by what methods of historical investigation Mr. Upham proceeds, when he makes such assertions without examination of the important documents here adduced.

These Goodwin children performed some strange pranks. "They would fly like geese, and be carried through the air, having but just their toes now and then on the ground. One of them, in the house of a kind neighbor and gentleman (Mr. Willis), flew the length of a room about twenty feet, none see-

* Mem. Prov., p. 13.

† History, Vol. II. p. 370.

ing her feet all the way touch the floor." They threw themselves down stairs, and jumped into the fire and into the water. Their dangers and deliverances were so many as to cause the kind-hearted narrator "to consider whether the little ones had not their angels, in the plain sense of our Saviour's intimation." At family prayers they would "roar and shriek and holla," to drown the voice of devotion. "In short," says Mr. Mather, "no good thing must then be endured near those children, who (while they are themselves) do love every good thing in a measure that proclaims in them the fear of God."

Mr. Mather took one of these pests to his own house, where he kept her during the autumn and winter of 1688–89. He endured from her all manner of annoyance and vexation, but not a word of reproach or complaint did he utter. For a time "she applied herself not only to acts of industry, but to piety, as she had been no stranger to." Then of a sudden she would cry, "They have found me out!" and go into fits.

She stated that *they* (her spirits) brought to her an invisible horse. She would throw herself in a riding position into a chair and gallop about the room, "the bystanders not perceiving that she was moved by her feet upon the floor, for often they touched it not." Sometimes she would be carried *from* the chair oddly about the room, in the posture of a riding-woman. A spectator once asked her if she could ride up the stairs. She thought she could, and the next time the horse came, "to our admiration she rode (that is, was tossed as one that rode) up the stairs."

Speaking of her being able to read some books and not others, Mr. Mather says: "I was not insensible that this girl's capacity to read, or incapacity to read, was no test; therefore I did not proceed much further in this fanciful business, not knowing what snares the devils might lay for us in these trials."

So the winter wore away, with a recurrence at intervals of these strange actions, some absurd, others curious, and all entertaining.

Mr. Mather concludes by saying that the story is all made up of wonders, but that he has related nothing but what he believes to be true; and he hopes his neighbors have long thought that he has "otherwise learned Christ than to lie unto the world."

"Yea," he declares, "there is, I believe, scarce any one particular in this narrative which more than one credible witness will not be ready to make oath unto. The things of most concernment in it were before many critical observers, and all sorts of persons that had a mind to satisfy themselves. I do now publish the history, while the thing is fresh and new; and I challenge all men to detect so much as one designed falsehood, yea, so much as one important mistake, from the egg to the apple of it. I am resolved after this never to use but just one grain of patience with any man that shall go to impose upon me a denial of devils or of witches. I shall count that man ignorant who shall suspect; but I shall count him downright impudent, if he asserts the non-existence of things which we have had such palpable convictions of." — *Mem. Pror.* p. 40.

No edition of the "Memorable Providences" has been issued since the London reprint of 1691, with a Preface by Mr. Richard Baxter, in which he states that "this great instance cometh with such full, convincing evidence, that he must be a very obdurate Sadducee that will not believe it." Mr. Baxter quoted from it largely in his "Certainty of the World of Spirits," 1691, and was in the habit of recommending his hearers to buy it. Both editions are now very rare, and cost their weight in gold. Its republication at this time would be a contribution to the literature of Spiritualism.

In Mr. Upham's view, the Goodwin affair had a very important relation to the Salem troubles. Cotton Mather "got up" this case; this case "got up" the Salem cases; therefore Cotton Mather "got up" Salem Witchcraft. This is the argument concisely stated. It is proper, therefore, to inquire what there was in Mr. Mather's practice with the Goodwin children that foreshadowed the shocking scenes at Salem. His whole conduct in this transaction — call it credulous and superstitious, if the reader will — was marked with kindness, patience, and Christian charity towards the accused, the afflicted children, their friends, and four poor wretches, who, if the affair had been in other hands, might have come under condemnation. He had a method of his own for the treatment of witchcraft and possession. He believed in the power of prayer. The Almighty Sovereign was his Father, and had promised to hear and answer his petitions. He had often tested this promise, and had found it faithful and sure. Some will call such

faith as his credulity and superstition; but this was Cotton Mather's method. He applies it to the cases in question. The children all recover. He deems it an act of grace in answer to prayer. He writes his "Memorable Providences" to prove two propositions: 1. That witchcraft is a reality, and 2. To illustrate the proper method of treating it. In his introductory note "To the Reader" he says: "Prayer is the powerful and effectual remedy against the malicious practices of devils and those that covenant with them"; and concludes the narrative as he began, with these words: "All that I have now to publish is, that Prayer and Faith was the thing which drove the devils from the children; and I am to bear this testimony unto the world: That the Lord is nigh to all them who call upon Him in truth, and that blessed are all they that wait for Him." *

The peculiarity of the Salem cases was, that the managers hanged their witches, and the more victims they hanged the more the delusion spread. Cotton Mather, on the other hand, prayed with and for his bewitched ones, exorcised the demons (as he supposed), saved the children, suppressed the names of those accused, and put a stop to all further proceedings. Hutchinson says: † "The children returned to their ordinary behavior, lived to an adult age, made profession of religion, and the affliction they had been under they publicly declared to be one motive to it. One of them I knew many years after. She had the character of a very sober, virtuous woman, and never made any acknowledgment of fraud in the transaction." Mr. John Goodwin and his wife Martha united with Mr. Mather's church, May 25, 1690. Before this their relations had been with the church at Charlestown. The four children were subsequently admitted to Mr. Mather's church. Nathaniel Goodwin, the eldest of the sons, July 22, 1728, took out letters of administration on Cotton Mather's estate.

This is a record which requires no apology. Can Mr. Upham suggest any improvement in Cotton Mather's management of a witch case? Why do we not find some of these facts in his History? Would Cotton Mather, who had a method of his own, which he had practised with eminent success, and for the

* Mem. Prov., p. 44.

† Hist. of Mass., Vol. II. p. 26.

purpose of illustrating and commending it to the world had written a book, have instigated, and taken a "secret pleasure" in, the detestable methods pursued at Salem, unless he had been himself bewitched? This charge is the corner-stone on which the whole fabric of Mr. Upham's misrepresentations of Cotton Mather rests. If this crumbles, the whole must fall.

"The wise and learned of his [Cotton Mather's] day, and before it, had faith in judicial astrology; but of this he ventures boldly to express his scepticism, — a remarkable fact, certainly, considering his reputation for unbounded credulity. So, too, he rejected all kind of charms and incantations and exorcisms, all vulgar antidotes to witchcraft and the common machinery of magic, and ridiculed the notion, not now out of belief, that a seventh son is born with extraordinary qualities. The only weapon with which he sought to resist the powers of evil, or control them, was the arm of the law, or, what he preferred to that, prayer and fasting." — S. F. Haven, *North American Review*, Vol. LI. p. 11.

Mr. Upham and Mr. Peabody* uniformly speak of Cotton Mather at this period of his life as *Dr.* Mather, a title which recalls to the reader the mature and majestic face, the flowing wig, the clerical bands, and the silk robe depicted in the well-known portrait. Mr. Mather received his degree of Doctor of Divinity from the University of Glasgow in 1710, when he was forty-seven years of age, and it was near this time, probably, that the portrait was painted. But at the time he "got up" the Goodwin case he was only twenty-five years old, and, considering his youth and inexperience, we think his conduct in the matter entitles him to great praise. Though a boy in years, he was a prodigy in talent and erudition. At the age of eleven years and six months, when he entered Harvard College, he had read Cicero, Terence, Ovid, and Virgil, and wrote Latin with freedom. He had read through his Greek Testament, and had commenced the study of Homer, Isocrates, and the Hebrew Grammar. In college he mastered the Hebrew, and composed treatises on logic and physic, besides prosecuting the usual curriculum of collegiate studies. Almost any other boy would have been ruined by the compliments and flattery lavished upon him. When he took his first degree at the age

* Mr. Peabody (p. 225) says: "Little did the venerable doctor think," etc. The venerable doctor was twenty-nine years of age! and was no doctor at all.

of fifteen, President Oakes addressed him in Latin to this effect: —

"Cotton Mather! What a name! I confess, my hearers, I have erred; I should have said, What names! I shall say nothing of his father (since I am unwilling to praise him to his face); but if he should represent and illustrate the piety, learning, elegant culture, solid judgment, prudence, and dignity of his most eminent grandfathers, John Cotton and Richard Mather, he will bear away every prize; and in this youth I trust Cotton and Mather, names so eminent, will unite and live again."

He was admitted a freeman and began to preach at the age of seventeen. The facility with which he acquired languages was remarkable. At twenty-five years of age he could write in seven languages, one of them the Iroquois. Proud of his ancestry and his attainments, the wonder is that we find so much in his character that is charitable, affectionate, and lovely.* His great aim in life was to do good. His intense application to study left him but little time to mingle in the common pursuits of life, and hence his knowledge of ordinary human nature was less than that of many men with inferior abilities. He was doubtless the most brilliant man of his day in New England. Within the last forty years, however, there has grown up a fashion, among our historical writers, of defaming his character and underrating his productions. For a specimen of these attacks the reader is referred to a "Supposed Letter from Rev. Cotton Mather, D. D.," † with comments on the same by James Savage. Meanwhile his writings have been

* As an illustration of these qualities, we give an extract from a letter of Cotton Mather to John Saffin, an old man with many domestic troubles, dated July 19, 1710.

"All former and crooked things must be buried. There must be no repeating of matters which never can be exactly rectified. There is a Scotch proverb, that you must keep to, — By-gones be by-gones, and fair play for the time to come. Do the part of a gentleman. Cheerfully entertain the reputable character of a *miles emeritus*. Repose is the milk of old age. No more earth now, Sir, but all for heaven! You must lay aside all bitterness; and the more bravely you forgive all real or supposed injuries, the more sweetly you will be prepared for the consolations of your own forgiveness. Good Sir, throw all embitterments into a grave before you go into your own." — *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, Vol. XXI. pp. 137 – 139.

Saffin died a few days after the date of this letter (29th July, 1710), at Bristol, R. I.

† Mass. Hist. Coll., Vol. XXXII. p. 122.

more and more sought for, and their cost is now so great, with the exception of such as have been reprinted, as to put them beyond the reach of all but wealthy collectors. One of our best living historical writers, in a public address, speaks of the "Magnalia" as an "historical medley which is beneath criticism in any point of view." * This writer, nevertheless, has drawn upon it largely in making his own books. Mr. Peabody says: "The Magnalia has fallen into disrepute with those who read for instruction. Its value is not to be estimated by its usefulness, but by the more doubtful standard of its oddity and its age." † And again: "His works are of a kind which were attractive in their day, but now sleep in repose, where even the antiquary seldom disturbs them." ‡ Yet no student of New England history can dispense with the "Magnalia." The original edition of 1702, published at one pound, will now bring ten pounds, and it has twice been reprinted within the present century. Mr. Mather's other books and tracts, numbering nearly four hundred, were never so much prized by collectors as to-day. Many of them will command their weight in sovereigns. It is not, however, with his general character, or the merit of his writings, that we are at present concerned, but with his alleged connection with Salem Witchcraft.

It seems never to have occurred to Mr. Upham that the name of Cotton Mather does not once appear in Governor Hutchinson's account of the Salem delusion, — and yet he says: § "Hutchinson's History of Massachusetts is, perhaps, the most valuable authority on the subject. He enjoyed an advantage over any other writer before, since, or hereafter, so far as relates to the witchcraft proceedings in 1692; for he had access to all the records and documents connected with it, a great part of which have subsequently been lost or destroyed. His treatment of that particular topic is more satisfactory than can elsewhere be found." This statement we fully indorse. How, then, can Mr. Upham explain the circumstance, that Hutchinson, having all the original documents, and being the most valuable authority on the subject, should nevertheless omit to mention the agency, or even the name, of the alleged chief

* Mass. Hist. Coll., Vol. XXIX. p. 173.
† Life of Mather, p. 269.
‡ Ibid., p. 349.
§ History, Vol. I. p. 415.

actor? — Again, Thomas Brattle, the Treasurer of Harvard College, (not William Brattle, a merchant of Boston, as Mr. Upham states,*) wrote, at the time, an account of Salem Witchcraft. He was a candid and impartial writer, a stanch unbeliever in the methods pursued at Salem, personally acquainted with the prominent individuals engaged, and an authority whom Mr. Upham never mentions but with approval. Mr. Brattle gives the names of other persons, — both of those who incited and abetted, and those who utterly disapproved and denounced the proceedings, — but he never once mentions Cotton Mather. He gives the initials "C. M." in one strange connection (if Mr. Upham's theory be true), and has some remarks, of a still more surprising character, concerning "a Rev. person of Boston" (which will be considered in another part of this inquiry); but he seems to have been wholly unconscious of the iniquity which Cotton Mather was committing.

It ought to have occurred to Mr. Upham that he has sufficiently accounted for the origin of the Salem proceedings without laying any portion of the responsibility upon Cotton Mather. He assigns as causes: 1. The general prevalence of erroneous opinions respecting diabolical agency, as well in England as in this country; 2. The parish troubles in Salem Village, to which he devotes much space; 3. The Indian servants of Mr. Parris, who taught the afflicted children their tricks; 4. The intrigue and malice of Mr. Parris; 5. The family and neighborhood feuds of the village; 6. The stolid credulity of the local magistrates, Hathorne and Curwin; 7. The infatuation of the judges in admitting spectral testimony, and adhering to the dogma that the Devil could act only through willing confederates. These would seem to be sufficient to account for the origin of the Salem delusion. Cotton Mather had no connection with these incidents, and he had no opinions on witchcraft that were not held by all the clergy of the land. The storm was raised, the jails of the county were filled, persons had confessed themselves to be witches and were accusing others, and the whole community was in an uproar, before Cotton Mather's name appears legitimately in the tragedy.

* History, Vol. II. p. 450.

"Stoughton was in full sympathy with Cotton Mather, whose influence had been used in procuring his appointment over Danforth." * The Chief Justice, indeed, was in full sympathy with Mr. Mather as a friend, but not in the methods of trying alleged witches. Their opinions on this subject were diametrically opposed. Stoughton admitted spectral testimony against the accused; † Mather, in his writings on the subject, denounced it as illegal, uncharitable, and cruel. All the judicial murders at Salem grew out of the acceptance of this rule by the Court. All questions in debate at the time, concerning the trial of witches, centred in this: "What sort of evidence shall be taken?" Everybody believed in witchcraft, and in punishing witches; but some persons, and among them Mr. Mather, believed in trying them by legal methods.

Mr. Upham says: ‡ "I know nothing more artful and jesuitical than his attempt, in the following passage, to escape the odium that had been connected with the prosecutors: 'The world knows how many pages I have composed and published, and particular gentlemen in the government know how many letters I have written, to prevent the excessive credit of spectral accusations.'" This statement, so far from being artful and jesuitical, was literally true, though Mr. Upham had never seen the evidence of it, which is to be found in a letter which Mr. Mather wrote to John Richards, one of the judges, and his own parishioner, May 31, 1692, three days before the trials commenced at Salem. The letter is one of the "Mather Papers," for many years deposited with, and recently printed by, the Massachusetts Historical Society. Samuel Mather, in the "Life of Cotton Mather," 1729, page 44, makes mention of this letter as follows: "Mr. Mather, for his part, was always afraid of proceeding to convict and condemn any person as a confederate with afflicting demons upon so feeble an evidence as a spectral representation. Accordingly he ever testified against it, both publicly and privately; and particularly in his Letter to the Judges he besought them that they would by no means admit it; and when a considerable assembly of ministers gave in their advice about the matter, he not only concurred with the

* History, Vol. II. p. 250. † Ibid., p. 356.

‡ Lectures, p. 107; History, Vol. II. p. 367.

advice, but he drew it up." A search for this letter, in a collection so well known as the "Mather Papers," would seem to be the first duty of an historian, before putting in print such a grave accusation, and repeating it thirty-six years later. It was the lack of such research that led Mr. Upham and his followers into many of their errors. In this letter Mr. Mather says: —

"And yet I most humbly beg you, that, in the management of the affair in your most worthy hands, you do not lay more stress upon pure spectre testimony than it will bear. When you are satisfied, and have good, plain, legal evidence, that the demons which molest our poor neighbors do indeed represent such and such people to the sufferers, though this be a presumption, yet I suppose you will not reckon it a conviction, that the people so represented are witches to be immediately exterminated. It is very certain that the devils have represented the shapes of persons not only innocent, but also very virtuous. Though I believe that the just God then ordinarily provides a way for the speedy vindication of the persons thus abused.

"Moreover, I do suspect that persons who have too much indulged themselves in malignant, envious, malicious ebullition of their souls may unhappily expose themselves to the judgment of being represented by devils, of whom they never had any vision, and with whom they have much less written any covenant.

"I would say this: If, upon the bare supposal of a poor creature's being represented by a spectre, too great a progress be made by the authority in ruining a poor neighbor so represented, it may be that a door may be thereby opened for the devils to obtain from the courts in the invisible world a license to proceed unto most hideous desolations upon the repute and repose of such as have yet been kept from the great transgression. *If mankind have thus far once consented unto the credit of diabolical representation, the door is opened!* Perhaps there are wise and good men that may be ready to style him that shall advance this caution a *witch advocate;* but in the winding up, this caution will certainly be wished for." — *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, 4th Series, Vol. VIII. pp. 392, 393.

Mr. Mather, in this letter, expresses his full belief in the reality of witchcraft, and in the duty of the civil magistrates to discover, if possible, and extirpate, those who are guilty of it. But while fighting devils, he was full of compassion for poor afflicted mortals.

His advice was not adopted by the judges. The Court, which met June 2, after the trial and conviction of Bridget Bishop, finding that the excitement and the number of accused persons were increasing, took a recess till June 29. In the mean time the Governor and Council, in view of the alarming aspect of affairs, asked the advice of the ministers of Boston and the vicinity. As the advice of the ministers was drawn up by Cotton Mather, it becomes important evidence in this case, as well on his account as on that of his associates. Mr. Upham has never seen fit to print this paper; and as its import has been so often misstated, we give it in full.

"*The Return of several Ministers consulted by his Excellency and the Honorable Council, upon the present Witchcrafts in Salem Village.*

"BOSTON, June 15, 1692.

"I. The afflicted state of our poor neighbors that are now suffering by molestations from the Invisible World we apprehend so deplorable, that we think their condition calls for the utmost help of all persons in their several capacities.

"II. We cannot but with all thankfulness acknowledge the success which the merciful God has given unto the sedulous and assiduous endeavors of our honorable rulers to detect the abominable witchcrafts which have been committed in the country; humbly praying that the discovery of these mysterious and mischievous wickednesses may be perfected.

"III. We judge that in the prosecution of these and all such witchcrafts there is need of very critical and exquisite caution, lest, by too much credulity for things received only on the Devil's authority, there be a door opened for a long train of miserable consequences, and Satan get an advantage over us; for we should not be ignorant of his devices.

"IV. As in complaints upon witchcrafts there may be matters of inquiry which do not amount to matters of presumption, and there may be matters of presumption which may not be reckoned matters of conviction, so 't is necessary that all proceedings thereabout be managed with an exceeding tenderness toward those that may be complained of, especially if they have been persons formerly of an unblemished reputation.

"V. When the first inquiry is made into the circumstances of such as may lie under any just suspicion of witchcrafts, we could wish that there may be admitted as little as is possible of such noise, company, and openness as may too hastily expose them that are examined; and that there may nothing be used as a test for the trial of the suspected,

the lawfulness whereof may be doubted among the people of God; but that the directions given by such judicious writers as *Perkins* and *Bernard* be consulted in such a case.

"VI. Presumptions whereupon persons may be committed, and much more convictions whereupon persons may be condemned as guilty of witchcrafts, ought certainly to be more considerable than barely the accused person being represented by a Spectre unto the afflicted; inasmuch as 't is an undoubted and a notorious thing, that a demon may, by God's permission, appear even to ill purposes in the shape of an innocent, yea, and a virtuous man. Nor can we esteem alterations made in the sufferers by a look or a touch of the accused to be infallible evidence of guilt, but frequently liable to be abused by the Devil's leger-demains.

"VII. We know not whether some remarkable affronts given to the devils, by our disbelieving of those testimonies whose whole force and strength is from them alone, may not put a period unto the progress of the dreadful calamity begun upon us in the accusation of so many persons, whereof we hope some are yet clear from the great transgression laid unto their charge.

"VIII. Nevertheless, we cannot but humbly recommend unto the Governor the speedy and vigorous prosecution of such as have rendered themselves obnoxious, according to the direction given in the laws of God and the wholesome statutes of the English nation for the detection of witchcrafts." — INCREASE MATHER'S *Cases of Conscience, Postscript;* also HUTCHINSON'S *Hist. of Mass.*, Vol. II. p. 52.

Concerning this important document Mr. Upham prints only the following: "These reverend gentlemen, while urging in general terms the importance of caution and circumspection in the methods of examination, decidedly and earnestly recommended that the proceedings should be vigorously carried on; and they were, indeed, vigorously carried on." * The Advice, instead of urging caution in "general terms," was very specific in excluding spectral testimony, and evidence from alterations in the sufferers by the look and touch of the accused, — in excluding noise, company, and bustle, — in counselling the judges to take the directions given by such judicious writers as Perkins and Bernard, — and in recommending "an exceeding tenderness towards the accused, especially if they have borne an unblemished reputation." These were

* History, Vol. II. p. 268.

the very points on which the judges erred, and it is these errors that have made those scenes so memorable. Is that a fair statement which omits the essential and concluding portion of the last section? "In the laws of God and the wholesome statutes of the English nation" had a meaning in the minds of those ministers. The laws of God require two witnesses to prove the charge in a capital trial; the wholesome statutes of England demanded competent witnesses and legal evidence, even in a witch trial. Mr. Upham says: "They recommended that the proceedings should be vigorously carried on." What *proceedings?* The word is not to be found in the Advice. The impression is left on the mind of the reader that the ministers indorsed the Salem proceedings, against which, in the principles it sets forth, the whole paper is an earnest protest. One who brings such charges as the following might, in common justice, have given the profession to which he himself belonged the benefit of allowing the ministers concerned to state their opinions in their own words: "The intimate connection of *Dr.* Mather and other prominent ministers with the witchcraft delusion brought a reproach upon the clergy from which they have not yet recovered."* The same observation is repeated in his History.† Mr. Quincy says:‡ "The guilt of the excesses and horrors consequent on that excitement rests, and ought to rest, heavily upon the leading divines and politicians of the colony at that period." There was nothing in Cotton Mather's connection with those "excesses and horrors" for which any clergyman need hang his head. The ministers' advice will be further noticed presently.

Cotton Mather believed that devils were concerned in the proceedings at Salem. If this be superstition, he was very superstitious. But not a single person who held the faith of the Christian Church at that day can be named who had any other belief. Calef, Brattle, and Pike, who are accredited by Mr. Upham with superior intelligence in opposing the Salem delusion, fully indorsed the popular theory as to the reality of witchcraft. We are free to confess, that, if there be a Devil,

* Lectures, p. 114.
† Vol. II p. 369.
‡ Hist. Harv. Univ., Vol. I. p. 64.

and it can be shown that he had no part or lot in the transactions at Salem, then is he an objectless and superfluous being in the moral economy of the universe. If, on the other hand, there be no Devil, then we claim that the human instincts demand the supposition of one, to account for the diabolisms there perpetrated: innocent people confessing themselves to be witches, and accusing others; children swearing away the lives of their parents; and judges of spotless moral and religious character convicting and hanging their fellows on spectral or "devils' testimony." "O condition truly miserable!" says Cotton Mather. "It is wonderfully necessary that some healing attempts should be made at this time. I should think dying a trifle to be undergone for so great a blessedness."* These are the remedies which he proposes. "I would most importunately, in the first place, entreat every man to maintain a holy jealousy over his own soul at this time. Let us more generally agree to maintain a kind opinion of one another. If we disregard this rule of charity, we shall indeed give our body politic to be burned."† After quoting from the sixth section of the advice of the Boston ministers, and giving the obnoxious eighth section entire, he says: "Only 't is a most commendable cautiousness in those gracious men to be very shy, lest the Devil get so far into our faith, as that, for the sakes of many truths which we find he tells us, we come at length to believe any lies wherewith he may abuse us; whereupon, what a desolation of names would then ensue, besides a thousand other pernicious consequences! and lest there should be any other such principles taken up as when put into practice must unavoidably cause the righteous to perish with the wicked."‡ These words are an authoritative explanation (if one were needed) of the meaning of the advice of the Boston ministers, by the hand that drew up that paper; but they are not found in either of Mr. Upham's books. Everything serving to explain the actual position of Cotton Mather and the Boston clergy seems to have been omitted.

Mr. Mather wrote his "Wonders" while the excitement was at its height, by express command of the Governor, as a record of the Salem trials. In it he spoke respectfully of the judges,

* Wonders of the Invisible World, p. 11. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid., p. 12.

and of "their heart-breaking solicitudes how they might therein best serve both God and men. Have there been faults on any side fallen into? Surely they have at worst been but the faults of a well-meaning ignorance." * He submitted it, when completed, to Stoughton, who gave it his cordial approval. This approval we regard as applying to the writer's views on witchcraft in general, and to the reports of the trials contained therein, which were chiefly or wholly furnished by the clerk of the courts at Salem, rather than to Mr. Mather's spirit and views of the conduct of the trials, which were wholly at variance with Stoughton's ideas.† Isolated expressions and passages can be selected, which, separated from their connection, appear harsh and cruel; but we must take the book as a whole, and must consider the time and the circumstances of its composition. Thus viewed, Mr. Mather appears as a peacemaker, instead of an instigator of further excitement. While expressing freely his own opinion of methods, he deprecated the heated controversy which had arisen on the subject. "We are to unite," he says, "in such methods for this deliverance as may be unquestionably safe, lest *the latter end be worse than the beginning*." He proceeds: —

"And here I will venture to say thus much, that we are safe when we make just as much use of all advice from the invisible world as God sends it for. It is a safe principle, that, *when God Almighty permits any spirits from the unseen regions to visit us with surprising informations*, there is then something to be inquired after; *we are then to inquire of one another what cause there is for such things*." — *Wonders*, p. 13.

We have italicized portions of the above extract for the purpose of indicating the authority on which Mr. Longfellow evi-

* Wonders of the Invisible World, p. 13.

† This statement will, perhaps, be better understood, if we add that the work consists of several distinct parts. Mr. Mather first gives his own views, some of which we have quoted; then an abstract of Mr. Perkins's way for the discovery of witches, and several discourses on the enormity of witchcraft, which are followed by reports of five of the Salem trials, and some additional matter. Of the reports, he says, They are "an abridgment collected out of the Court papers on this occasion put into my hands. . . . . I have singled out four or five which may serve to illustrate the way of dealing wherein witchcrafts use to be concerned; and I report matters, not as an advocate, but as an historian." — *Wonders*, p. 55.

dently relied for the words which he puts into Cotton Mather's mouth in addressing Hathorne, the magistrate.

"If God permits
These evil spirits from the unseen regions
To visit us with surprising informations,
We must inquire what cause there is for this,
But not receive the testimony borne
By spectres as conclusive proof of guilt
In the accused." *

Mr. Thomas Brattle, who denounced the methods pursued at Salem as "rude and barbarous," † spoke, nevertheless, in charitable terms of the judges. Of Stoughton he says: —

"The chief judge is very zealous in these proceedings, and says he is very clear as to all that hath as yet [October 8, 1692] been acted by this court, and, as far as ever I could perceive, is very impatient in hearing anything that looks another way. I very highly honor and reverence the wisdom and integrity of the said judge, and hope that this matter shall not diminish my veneration for his Honor; however, I cannot but say my great fear is that wisdom and counsel are withheld from his Honor as to this matter, which yet I look upon not so much as a judgment to his Honor as to this poor land." — *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, Vol. V. p. 74.

The cases before Chief Justice Holt, which, with the Salem trials, produced a revulsion of feeling in England, were not tried till 1704. The judges at Salem were doubtless carried away by the storm of excitement that was raging around them, and by the strange manifestations exhibited before their eyes. They rejected the advice concerning "critical and exquisite caution," and the recommendation of such judicious authorities as Perkins and Bernard, submitted by the clergy of Boston. These writers were also clergymen, who were deemed by the judges to know but little of law as a technical science. The opinions of the clergy, however, on legal and political subjects into which moral questions enter largely are not always safely to be rejected. It had been well with the twenty victims at Salem, if the ministers of the colony, instead of the lawyers, had determined their fate. And yet the chief responsibility for those judicial murders at Salem has been ascribed to the

* New England Tragedies, p. 110. † Mass. Hist. Coll., Vol. V. p. 72.

credulity and superstition of the New England clergy, and that, too, by members of the same profession.*

While the trials at Salem were in progress, Increase Mather, then President of Harvard College, was requested by the ministers of Boston to prepare a more elaborate statement of their views, a brief synopsis of which was contained in their advice of June 15. He entered upon the work forthwith, and finished it October 3, 1692. It was printed soon after in Boston and London, with the title of "Cases of Conscience concerning Evil Spirits personating Men," 1693. The copy before us is a reprint, bearing the date, London, 1862. The note, "To the Reader," indorsing the statements and opinions contained in the work, is signed by fourteen ministers of Boston and the vicinity. This is, perhaps, one of the most important documents relating to the history of Salem Witchcraft, and cannot be ignored in a full and candid treatment of the subject. How it should have escaped Mr. Upham's attention is more than we can account for. Calef makes allusions to, and quotations from, it in seven instances. We assume that Mr. Upham has not seen this tract, as he has neither mentioned it nor made use of its material. He seems to be in a quandary as to the position of Increase Mather in these proceedings. At one time he makes the father to be equally implicated with the son. Then he qualifies this opinion, and shows a discrepancy in their views. Again, he relapses into his first position, and finally concludes that the father has much the better record of the two. The truth is, that they held the same opinions. If Mr. Upham had seen the "Cases of Conscience," he would have known what Increase Mather's opinions were.

The book affirms the existence of witchcraft and witches. "The Scriptures assert it, and experience confirms it. They are the common enemies of mankind, and set upon mischief." It is chiefly devoted to the methods of detecting and punishing witches, which was the question of the day. "The more exe-

* Calef's enmity to the Mathers, and his want of candor as an historical writer, appear in the following extract: "It is rather a wonder that no more blood was shed; for if that advice of his [the Governor's] pastors [the two Mathers] could have still prevailed with him, witchcraft had not been so shammed off as it was." —*More Wonders*, p. 153.

crable the crime is," say the fourteen ministers in their preface, "the more critical care is to be used in the exposure of the names, liberties, and lives of men, especially of a godly conversation, to the imputation of it." Cotton Mather, in his "Wonders of the Invisible World" (p. 14), has substantially the same remark: "But I will venture to say this further, that it will be safe to account the names, as well as the lives, of our neighbors." Would it not be well for historians, in dealing with the names of godly men of a past generation, to use the same critical care? Shall we blame our ancestors for practising methods in the twilight of the seventeenth century which we ourselves repeat in the noon of the nineteenth?

We shall quote from "Cases of Conscience" only with reference to a single inquiry, — whether spectres, fits, spasms, touches, and other abnormal appearances, are to be regarded as legal evidence. Mr. Mather answers this question in his opening sentence: —

> "The first case that I am desired to express my judgment in is this: Whether it is not possible for the Devil to impose on the imaginations of persons bewitched, and to cause them to believe that an innocent, yea, that a pious person does torment them, when the Devil himself doth it; or whether Satan may not appear in the shape of an innocent and pious, as well as of a nocent and wicked person, to afflict such as suffer by diabolical molestations. The answer to the question must be affirmative."

He then proceeds to prove it. In the course of his argument he quotes from Mr. Bernard: "If the Devil can represent to the witch a seeming Samuel, saying, 'I see gods ascending out of the earth,' to beguile Saul, may we not think he can represent a common ordinary man or woman, to deceive them and others that will give credit to the Devil?" Mr. Mather adds: "As for the judgment of the elders of N. E., so far as I can learn, they do generally concur with Mr. Perkins and Bernard." He regards the strange exhibitions proceeding from the sight and touch as occasioned by some demon. To use such exhibitions as evidence is nothing less than witchcraft itself. "We ought not," he says, "to practise witchcraft to discover witches. If we may not take the oath of a distracted or of a possessed person in a case of murder, theft, or felony of

any sort, then neither may we do it in a case of witchcraft." He makes "the judicious Mr. Perkins" his authority for the statement, that "the ways of trying witches in many nations were invented by the Devil himself." In his Postscript he says: —

"Some, I hear, have taken up the notion, that the book published by my son [Wonders of the Invisible World] is contradictory to this of mine. 'T is strange that such imaginations should enter into the minds of men. I perused and approved of that book before it was printed; and nothing but my relation to him hindered me from recommending it to the world. But myself and son agreed unto the humble advice which twelve ministers concurringly presented before his Excellency and Council respecting the present difficulties, which let the world judge whether there be anything in it dissentary from what is attested by either of us."

Cotton Mather, in the Life of his father, 1724 (p. 166), says: "But what gave the most illumination to the country, and a turn to the tide, was the special service which he did in composing and publishing his very learned *Cases of Conscience concerning Witchcraft*. . . . . Upon this the Governor pardoned such as had been condemned; and the spirit of the country ran violently upon acquitting all the accused."

Cotton Mather never attended one of the trials at Salem* in any capacity, — as adviser, witness, or spectator. He made visits to Salem while those sad and pitiful scenes were occurring, but, as we shall presently see, for quite another purpose than that which has been alleged. The intimation that he took delight in these proceedings is a groundless accusation. His book, though written in haste and amid excitement, is full of compassion for the poor afflicted ones. His method of combating witchcraft by spiritual weapons he never swerved from, even when admitting that the civil magistrates had a duty to perform. Not an expression implying bloodthirstiness can be found in all his writings. Pity for the suffering and charity for all were the ruling principles of his life. Prayer was ever his method of dealing with supposed cases of witchcraft. "O that, instead of letting our hearts rise against one another, our prayers might rise unto a high pitch of importunity! Especially let them that are suffering by witchcraft be sure and

* See his statement in Calef, p. 54.

stay and pray, and beseech the Lord thrice before they com plain of any neighbor for afflicting them." *

Soon after the outbreak at Salem, we find him endeavoring to put in practice the methods which had, as he supposed, restored the Goodwin children. For the following statement of his proceedings, written by Mr. Mather in 1693, but not printed by him, we are indebted to the book of his enemy, Calef.

"After that storm was raised at Salem, I did myself offer to provide meat, drink, and lodging for no less than six of the afflicted, that so an experiment might be made, whether Prayer with Fasting, upon the removal of the distressed, might not put a period to the trouble then rising, without giving the civil authority the trouble of prosecuting those things.

"In short, I do humbly, but freely, affirm it, there is not that man living in this world who has been more desirous than the poor man I to shelter my neighbors from the inconveniences of spectral outcries. . . . . The name of no one good person in the world ever came under any blemish by means of any afflicted person that fell under my particular cognizance; yea, no one man, woman, or child ever came into any trouble for the sake of any that were afflicted, after I had once begun to look after 'em. How often have I had this thrown into my dish, that many years ago I had an opportunity to have brought forth such people as have in the late storm of witchcraft been complained of, but that I smothered all!" — *More Wonders*, p. 11.

These statements appear in an account by Mr. Mather of the case of Margaret Rule in 1693. Calef obtained possession of the paper, and printed it seven years later, without Mr. Mather's consent, together with a letter from Mather to himself. These writings of Mr. Mather, which are nowhere else to be found, constitute the chief historical value of Calef's book. Mr. Mather, in his "Life of Sir William Phips," printed in 1697, and included, in 1702, in the "Magnalia," mentioned some of these incidents, but did not state that he himself was the person who made the proposals named. He says: —

"In fine, the country was in a dreadful ferment, and wise men foresaw a long train of dismal and bloody consequences. Hereupon they first advised that the afflicted might be kept asunder in the closest pri-

* Wonders of the Invisible World, p. 17.

vacy; and one particular person (whom I have cause to know), in pursuance of this advice, offered himself, singly, to provide accommodations for any six of them, that so the success of more than ordinary power of *prayer* and *fasting* might with *patience* be experienced, before any other courses were taken." — *Magnalia*, Vol. I. p. 210, Hartford, 1853.

There are later allusions to these incidents in "Some Few Remarks," 1701 (p. 38), "Life of Increase Mather," 1724 (p. 165), and "Life of Cotton Mather," 1729 (p. 45).

Mr. Upham charges Mr. Mather not only with "having been active in carrying on the delusion in Salem and elsewhere," but with having "endeavored, after the delusion subsided, to escape the disgrace of having approved of the proceedings, and pretended to have been in some measure opposed to them, while it can be too clearly shown that he was secretly and cunningly endeavoring to renew them during the next year in his own parish in Boston." * The evidence to sustain these grave charges Mr. Upham has not produced, and for the best of reasons, that it does not exist. His only attempt to sustain the accusation is by references to Mr. Mather's "Life of Sir William Phips." He says that the author published it anonymously, "in order that he might commend himself with more freedom." But an assumption of what Mr. Mather's motives were, and what "he was secretly and cunningly endeavoring" to do, is not proof. He says, further, that Mr. Mather, in the "Life of Phips," when quoting from the advice of the Boston ministers of June 15, 1692, "left out those passages in which it was vehemently urged to carry the proceedings on 'speedily and vigorously.'" Mr. Mather did not profess to quote the whole advice; he simply made extracts from it, omitting three entire sections, — the first, second, and eighth. The eighth section he printed in full in his "Wonders" (p. 12), which Mr. Upham has never done. In the five sections which he quoted he did not garble a sentence or change a word. If it were such a heinous crime for Cotton Mather, in writing the "Life of Sir William Phips," to omit three sections, how will Mr. Upham vindicate his own omissions, when, writing the history of these very transactions, and bringing the gravest charges against the character of the

* History, Vol. II. pp. 366, 367.

persons concerned, he leaves out seven sections? This advice is a part of the record, and does not exhibit the clergymen of Boston, and particularly Cotton Mather, at all in harmony with Mr. Upham's coloring.

But this is not all. Mr. Upham does not print any part of the eighth section as the ministers adopted it. He suppresses the essential portions, changes words, and by interpolation states that the ministers "decidedly," "earnestly," and "vehemently"* recommended that the "proceedings" should be vigorously carried on. One who quotes in this manner needs other evidence than that produced by Mr. Upham to entitle him to impeach Mr. Mather's integrity. He adds: "Unfortunately, however, for the reputation of Cotton Mather, Hutchinson has preserved the address of the ministers entire, and it appears that they approved, applauded, and stimulated the prosecutions, — and that the people of Salem and the surrounding country were the victims of a delusion, the principal promoters of which have, to a great degree, been sheltered from reproach by a dishonest artifice, which has now been exposed"! Mr. Upham supposes that Hutchinson, by good fortune, rescued the Advice from oblivion, and thus enabled him to expose Cotton Mather's dishonesty! Mr. Upham should have been familiar enough with the original sources of information on the subject to have found this Advice in print seventy-four years before Hutchinson's History appeared. Hutchinson took the Advice, as we did, from the Postscript of Increase Mather's "Cases of Conscience," 1693. Mr. Upham might have found this information in Calef, who says,† "The whole of the Advice is printed in 'Cases of Conscience,' the last pages."

The charge has been brought by many writers, that, while the excellent Samuel Sewall, one of the judges, made a public confession in the Old South Church, Cotton Mather never repented, nor openly expressed any remorse for the course pursued by him. Why should he? What had he to repent of? For what ought he to have felt remorse? For endeavoring to dissuade the judges from pursuing the course they did? For offering to take six of the afflicted children out of the excitement of Salem Village and care for them at his own house?

* History, Vol. II. pp. 268, 368.

† More Wonders, p. 152.

For believing that there were devils, and that evil spirits took part in the affairs of men? The more Mr. Mather saw and heard of these scenes at Salem, the more he was convinced of the reality of devils' agency. Calef, the alleged disbeliever, said, November 24, 1693:* "That there are witches is not the doubt; the Scriptures else were in vain, which assign their punishment to be death. But what this witchcraft is, and wherein does it consist, seems to be the whole difficulty." This statement was made after Mr. Mather had prosecuted him for libel. Whether this circumstance had any influence on his opinions we leave for the consideration of Mr. Calef's admirers.

The more we investigate these events, the more strongly we are convinced that there was some influence exerted (we give it no name) which was wholly abnormal, and which cannot be accounted for on Mr. Upham's hypothesis of fraud and self-deception. Cotton Mather, his father, and all the religious men of that day went to their graves in full belief in the reality of witchcraft. It was the "blades" and "learned witlings of the Coffee House"† who objected to and ridiculed the doctrine. Writing in 1701 to his parishioners, Mather says: "About the troubles we have had from the invisible world, I have at present nothing to offer you, but that I believe they were too dark and too deep for ordinary comprehension, and it may be errors on both hands have attended them, which will never be understood until the day when Satan shall be bound after another manner than he is at this day. But for my own part, I know not that ever I have advanced any opinion in the matter of witchcraft but what all the ministers of the Lord that I know of in the world, whether English, or Scotch, or French, or Dutch (and I know many), are of the same opinion with me."‡

Mr. Upham§ makes the statement, and often repeats it, that Cotton Mather's connection with Salem Witchcraft "left him a wreck,"—and this before he had reached the age of thirty years! But the course pursued even by the judges did not impair their popularity. Stoughton and most of his associates were reappointed, when, soon after, the court was remodelled,

* More Wonders, p. 17.
† Mather in Calef, p. 10.
‡ Some Few Remarks, p. 42.
§ History, Vol. II. p. 503.

and served for years with the confidence and the esteem of the public. Mr. Parris maintained his position as minister at Salem Village for five years after the witch excitement, and the immediate cause of his leaving was his quarrel with the parish concerning thirty cords of wood and the fee of the parsonage.* How Cotton Mather should have been left a wreck requires some explanation. Mr. Upham illustrates this point by a long extract from Mr. Mather's private diary, written thirty-two years later, and four years before his death, in which no allusion is made to Salem Witchcraft. The writer was then in the deepest domestic affliction. His third wife was insane. Thirteen of his fifteen children had died, which had nearly broken his heart. His eldest son, Increase, for his recklessness and dissipation, had been sent to sea, and news had just arrived that he had been washed overboard. His own mind, says Mr. Peabody, was "almost on the verge of insanity." In the passage Mr. Upham quotes, Mr. Mather thinks that he has not so many friends as he deserves, — that many of his intentions to do good have met with little success, — and that he should have had the Presidency of Harvard College. It requires a lively imagination to connect these morbid feelings with Salem Witchcraft. Mr. Mather's course in introducing inoculation for small-pox in 1720, in the face of nearly the whole medical profession, — who opposed it on theological grounds, while he advocated it on medical principles, — did for a time impair his popularity with his contemporaries, and occasioned him much annoyance.† But his publications, of which thirty-one appeared before 1693, and three hundred and fifty-two subsequently, show that the witchcraft delusion of 1692 did not leave him a wreck.

It may seem strange that one who wrote so many books made no public vindication of himself, and that we must go to the book of his personal enemy, Calef, for facts with which to defend him from modern reproaches. He had done nothing that required vindication. He kept on his way and left events to explain themselves. Calef's course, in 1693, he regarded as a deliberate attempt to break down his character and usefulness. He wrote Calef a letter, by the printing of which the

* Drake's Witchcraft, Vol. III. p. 220. † Mather Papers, p. 448.

latter demolished his own credibility as a witness. A copy of Calef's "More Wonders of the Invisible World," in the Massachusetts Historical Society's Library, has on the cover an autograph note of Mather's in these words: "Job xxxi. 35, 36. My Desire is — that mine Adversary had written a Book. Surely I would take it upon my Shoulder, and bind it as a Crown to me. Co: Mather." In "Some Few Remarks" (p. 36), he says: "He [Calef] has been so uncivil as to print a composure of mine, utterly without and against my consent; but the good Providence of God has therein overruled his malice; for if that may have impartial readers, he will have his confutation, and I my perpetual vindication."

Calef's book, in our opinion, has a reputation much beyond its merits. What it contains condemnatory of the Salem proceedings was stated earlier, and in a clearer and more forcible manner, in the writings of the two Mathers and of Samuel Willard. If Mr. Upham had read Mr. Willard's "Some Miscellany Observations," printed in Philadelphia in 1692, he would never have said of Calef, that "his strong faculties and moral courage enabled him to become the most efficient opponent in his day of the system of false reasoning upon which the prosecutions rested"*; or of John Wise, of Ipswich, that "he was perhaps the only minister in the neighborhood or country who was discerning enough to see the erroneousness of the [Salem] proceedings from the beginning"†; or of Robert Pike's letter against the Salem methods, that "no such piece of reasoning has come down to us from that age."‡ Calef's faculties, as indicated by his writings, appear to us to have been of an inferior order; and as to his being "the most efficient opponent of the false reasoning," his name nowhere appears in the record until the storm had passed over, and the people had somewhat recovered their senses. Without discussing the character and motives of Calef, it is clear that he had a very feeble conception of what credible testimony is, or of the proper method of stating it. Mr. Mather and his friends believed that the misstatements of Calef's book arose from downright malice. Of his account of the interview at the bedside of Margaret Rule, in 1693, when he and the two

* History, Vol. II. p. 461. † Ibid., p. 305. ‡ Ibid., p. 448.

Mathers were present, Cotton Mather says, "There are as many lies as there are lines in it." It doubtless contained many misstatements; but we are willing to account for them by the writer's loose habits of observation, and looser methods of stating what he observed. When Calef, soon after, was passing his manuscript about, hearing that Mr. Mather intended to prosecute him for slander, he sent it to Mather, who replied, "I do scarcely find any one thing in the whole paper, whether respecting my father or self, either fairly or truly represented." He terms the narrative "an indecent travesty." He specifies some of its misrepresentations: —

"When the main design in visiting the poor afflicted creature was to prevent the accusations of the neighborhood, can it be fairly represented that our design was to draw out such accusations? When we asked Rule whether she thought she knew who tormented her, the question was but an introduction to the solemn charges which we then largely gave, that she should rather die than tell the names of any whom she might imagine that she knew. Your informers have reported the question, and report nothing of what follows as essential to the giving of that question. And can this be termed a piece of fairness? . . . 'T is no less untrue that either my father or self put the question, How many witches sit upon you? We always cautiously avoided that expression, it being contrary to our inward belief. All the standers-by* will, I believe, swear they did not hear us use it, your witnesses excepted; and I tremble to think how hardy those woful creatures must be to call the Almighty by an oath to so false a thing." — *Letter to Calef*, in *More Wonders*, p. 20.†

The precise form of the question to which Mr. Mather last objects appears in Calef's narrative thus: "What, do there a great many witches sit upon you?" Calef, in his reply, seeks to evade the point of Mr. Mather's objection by saying, "I find not in the narrative any such question as 'How many witches sit upon you?'"

As Calef persisted in circulating his paper, Mr. Mather caused him to be arrested for libel. The modern revilers of Mr. Mather say that he did not dare bring the case to trial. This explanation is wholly gratuitous. Mr. Mather, though

* There were from thirty to forty in the room.

† Mr. Peabody quotes Calef's statement, but omits Mr. Mather's denial. — *Life of Mather*, p. 251.

at first much annoyed by Calef's charges, soon found that no one whose good opinion he esteemed believed them.* Probably his feelings towards his traducer changed from resentment to scorn and pity, and he abandoned the suit as not worth following up. He said, after Calef's book appeared: —

"I have had the honor to be aspersed and abused by Robert Calef. I remember, that, when this miserable man sent unto an eminent minister in the town [Samuel Willard] a libellous letter, which he has now published, and when he demanded an answer, that reverend person only said: 'Go, tell him that the answer to him and his letter is in the twenty-sixth of the Proverbs and the fourth.' The reason that made me unwilling to trust any of my writings in the hands of this man was because I saw the weaver (though he presumes to call himself a merchant) was a stranger to all the rules of civility, and I foresaw I should be served as now I find." — *Some Few Remarks*, pp. 34, 35.

To Mr. Mather's severe letter Calef replied in a rambling statement, without substantiating his original charges, or seeming to appreciate the position in which the discussion left his own reputation as a credible witness. If he had not intentionally lied, he had a very imperfect appreciation of truth.

Mr. Mather has been reproved for trifling with Calef's name in calling him *Calf*. This was the family name. Two facsimiles of his own autograph, *Robert Calfe* and *Ro: Calfe*, may be seen in Drake's "Witchcraft Delusion."† His wife, in her will, wrote her name simply *Calf*.‡ The records of the town of Boston, April, 1694, show that Robert *Calfe* was chosen hayward and fence-viewer. We have seen also a facsimile of his autograph in a presentation copy of his book now in the possession of a gentleman in New York, written Robert *Calef*, in harmony with his title-page.

There is on every page of Mr. Upham's writings in which he alludes to Mr. Mather an unaccountable looseness of statement in minor details; and they are errors which lead the reader, who has not sufficient knowledge of the subject to correct them, to a wrong estimate of Mr. Mather's character. We will illustrate what we mean by a single extract concerning the case of Margaret Rule. Mr. Upham says:§ "He

* Some Few Remarks, p. 32.
† Vol. II. pp. xxii. xxiv.
‡ Ibid., p. xxv.
§ History, Vol. II. p. 489.

[Mr. Mather] succeeded that next summer in getting up a wonderful case of witchcraft, in the person of one Margaret Rule, a member of his congregation in Boston. *Dr.* Mather published an account of her long-continued fastings," etc. Mr. Mather did not "get up" the case of Margaret Rule. He went to see her, as Calef and crowds of other curious people did. The case did not occur in the summer: the date is patent to any one who will look for it. The girl was first taken with fits on the 10th of September, 1693, and the remarkable features of the case occurred subsequently. That she was a member of Mr. Mather's congregation before September, 1693, it will be difficult for Mr. Upham to prove.* Mr. Mather was not *Dr.* Mather. Mr. Mather did not publish an account of her long-continued fastings, or any other account of the case. These are not unimportant errors, but concern the character of one against whom Mr. Upham manifests a strong bias. Under these unsuspected historical inaccuracies Mr. Upham has introduced perhaps the most serious charge he has made against Cotton Mather. If, after the barbarities which had been committed at Salem, Cotton Mather the year following, he being of sane mind, "got up" the case referred to, for the purpose of repeating the Salem proceedings (as Mr. Upham again and again charges upon him), then we also would join with his enemies to cover his name and memory with infamy. But we claim that Mr. Mather shall not be condemned by other than competent evidence.

Mr. Upham's narrative proceeds in the same loose method: "So far was he successful in spreading the delusion, that he prevailed upon six men to testify that they had seen Margaret Rule lifted bodily from her bed and raised by an invisible

* The minister who prayed for the deliverance of this young woman, and "pleaded that she belonged to his flock and charge," and whom she called her father (Calef, p. 8), we may infer, from what follows on the next page, was not Mr. Mather, the writer, who says: "I inquired whether what had been said of that man were true, and I gained exact and certain information that it was precisely so; but I doubt, in relating this passage, that I have used more openness than a friend should be treated with." Mr. Drake says: "Where the family of Rule came from, or what became of them, does not appear. They were, perhaps, transient sojourners here." (Witchcraft Delusion, II. 49.) Mr. Bancroft (III. 97), following Mr. Upham, says that "Cotton Mather got up a case of witchcraft in his own parish."

power so as to touch the garret floor." This, of course, seems to Mr. Upham very absurd; but similar instances of elevation are recorded in modern times, and are believed in by those who accept the theory of spiritualism. A bed was lifted in this manner in the house of the Wesleys at Epworth. And Cotton Mather "prevailed upon six men" — Samuel Aves, Robert Earle, John Wilkins, Daniel Williams, Thomas Thornton, and William Hudson * — to testify in three depositions to — what? a fact? Testifying to a fact is a commonplace incident, and divests the statement of all its significance. The inference prepared for the reader is, that Mr. Mather prevailed upon six persons to testify to a falsehood, — and all this without a particle of evidence to sustain the charge.

No incident has been used with more effect to break down the reputation of Cotton Mather than the statement that he was present, mounted on horseback, at the execution of George Burroughs. Every school-boy knows the story by heart. This "dreadful horseman" has been tramping through history for nearly two centuries, down even into the text-books in our common schools. It is time that he reined up, at least for a moment, and gave some account of himself. The story has been used by many writers to show that Mr. Mather took delight in scenes of this description, and that he attended witch executions out of curiosity, and in full sympathy with these judicial murders. How changed would be the moral of the story, if it could be shown that he was there as the spiritual adviser and comforter of one or more of the sufferers that day!

The only authority for the story is Calef. Perhaps we have already said enough of Calef's disqualifications as a witness. An examination of his original statement will further illustrate his credibility.

"As soon as he [Burroughs] was turned off, Mr. Cotton Mather, being mounted upon a horse, addressed him-elf to the people, partly to declare that he was no ordained minister, and partly to possess the people of his guilt, saying that the Devil has often been transformed into an Angel of Light; and this did somewhat appease the people, and the executions went on." — *More Wonders*, p. 104.

* Calef, pp. 22, 23.

If we accept this statement, we must infer that five persons were hanged separately, or in squads, the other victims being kept in waiting for their turn. Here was a refinement of cruelty of which the authorities at Salem, in charity let us believe, were not capable. The mode of execution was very simple, and five persons could be swung off at once as easily as one. Calef himself furnishes us with evidence that such was the practice in Salem, where eight persons were hanged thirty-six days later. He says (p. 108): "After the executions, Mr. Noyes [a Salem minister], turning him to the bodies, said: 'What a sad thing it is to see eight firebrands of Hell hanging there!'" — an expression which has often been attributed to Cotton Mather. Mr. Upham cites, from a letter written by the venerable Dr. Holyoke, the statement of a person who "saw those unhappy people hanging on Gallows Hill."*

Calef goes on with his narrative: —

"When he [Burroughs] was cut down, he was dragged by the halter to a hole, or grave, between the rocks, about two feet deep, his shirt and breeches being pulled off, and an old pair of trousers of one executed put on his lower parts, he was so put in, together with [John] Willard and [Martha] Carrier, one of his hands and his chin, and a foot of one of them, being left uncovered."

Observe the minuteness of detail: three persons, one of them a woman, buried in a grave two feet deep! — a shirt and an old pair of trousers pulled off (in the presence of the crowd apparently) from one victim and put upon another! — and when the bodies were partially covered, and certain parts exposed, he states that one of the hands and the chin belonged to Burroughs, and a foot to some one of them! Our surprise is that Calef did not identify the foot. Mr. Upham expands the narrative of Calef by stating that the grave of Burroughs, Willard, and Carrier (two feet deep and uncovered) was "trampled down by the mob."† We have never seen any evidence of this assertion, and should be glad to have it produced.

Rev. William Bentley, D. D., in "A Description and History of Salem," printed in 1800,‡ speaking of the execution

* History, Vol. II. p. 377.

† Lectures, p. 104.

‡ Mass. Hist. Coll., Vol. VI. p. 268.

of Burroughs, says: "It was said that the bodies were not properly buried; but upon an examination of the ground, the graves were found of the usual depth, and the remains of the bodies, and of the wood in which they were interred." The bodies, it appears, were placed in coffins, and buried at the usual depth.* Calef's narrative is, therefore, shown to be incorrect or improbable in many particulars. He does not state that he was present at the executions, and may have had the story from mere rumor. We do not impute to him any intentional misrepresentation, but simply an incapacity to ascertain and state facts with accuracy; and inferences have been drawn from the narrative which the text of Calef does not warrant. There may be, too, a thread of truth amid this web of errors; and what that truth is we may possibly ascertain by investigation in other directions.

The attendance of a clergyman at a scene of execution, even on horseback, — at that time the common mode of travelling, — could have been no unusual circumstance. On the contrary, his presence on such occasions is deemed as necessary as that of the hangman. Were those five persons executed that day without any spiritual adviser? Had Mr. Mather spiritual relations with any of the sufferers? We beg to remind Mr. Upham of some facts in this connection which may be useful to him in case he prints a new edition of his History. Mr. Thomas Brattle, speaking of the persons who had been condemned, says: —

"They protested their innocency as in the presence of the great God, whom forthwith they were to appear before; they wished, and declared their wish, that their blood might be the last innocent blood shed upon that account. With great affection they entreated Mr. C. M. to pray with them; they prayed that God would discover what witchcrafts were among us; they forgave their accusers; they spake without reflection on jury and judges for bringing them in guilty and condemning them, and seemed to be very sincere, upright, and sensible

* It may be said that the bodies were reburied. But when, and by whom? The bodies of Proctor and Jacobs were delivered to their friends, and were buried on their own farms. What possible motive could there be for treating the remains of the other three victims with such indignity? For all that appears to the contrary in Calef's narrative, he is describing the final disposition of the bodies.

of their circumstances on all accounts; especially Proctor and Willard, whose whole management of themselves from the jail to the gallows was very affecting and melting to the hearts of some considerable spectators, whom I could mention to you." — *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, Vol. V. p. 68.

Mr. Brattle mentions no other person than "Mr. C. M." as the comforter and friend of the sufferers, "especially Proctor and Willard." In the above statement we trace the character of their spiritual counsellor. It was necessary for these persons to seek spiritual advice from abroad. Proctor begged Mr. Noyes to pray with him, but was refused, unless he would confess that he was guilty.* Proctor and Willard had been confined for several months in the Boston jail,† and there, doubtless, made Mr. Mather's acquaintance, as he was an habitual visitor of the prisons. We now see the object of Mr. Mather's visits to Salem, — for he attended none of the trials, — and what he means when he says: "It may be no man living ever had more people under preternatural and astonishing circumstances cast by the providence of God into his more particular care than I have had."‡ Would these persons have asked Mr. Mather to be their spiritual comforter, if he had been the agent, as has been alleged, of bringing them into their sad condition? If Mr. Mather was present at Witch Hill, August 19, 1692, he was there, we believe, simply in the performance of a sad duty to Proctor and Willard, who were executed that day. That his conduct and bearing on that occasion were in any manner deserving of reproach is wholly without proof or probability.

The following statement of Mr. Brattle is a complete refutation of the charges brought against the clergy for their agency in the witch trials: —

"But although the chief judge and some of the other judges be very zealous in these proceedings, yet this you may take for a truth, that there are several about the Bay, men of understanding, judgment, and piety inferior to few, if any, in New England, that do utterly condemn the said proceedings, and do freely deliver their judgment in the case to be this, viz., that these methods will utterly ruin and undo poor New England."

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* Lectures, p. 99.

† Felt's Salem, Vol. II. pp. 476, 477.

‡ Some Few Remarks, p. 39.

He mentions some of these, — namely, Simon Bradstreet, Thomas Danforth, Increase Mather, Samuel Willard, and Nathaniel Saltonstall. He adds: "Excepting Mr. Hale [of Beverly], Mr. Noyes and Mr. Parris [both of Salem], *the reverend elders almost throughout the whole country are very much dissatisfied.*" *

That Mr. Brattle should make no other mention of Cotton Mather than that heretofore adverted to requires some explanation, and raises the inquiry whether there is no tacit reference to him. If he acted the *rôle* assigned to him by Mr. Upham, the omission is wholly unaccountable. In the following passage Mr. Brattle alludes to some person whom he does not name: —

"I cannot but highly applaud, and think it our duty to be very thankful for, the endeavors of several elders, whose lips I think should preserve knowledge, and whose counsel should, I think, have been more regarded, in a case of this nature, than yet it hath been. In particular, I cannot but think very honorably of the endeavors of *a Rev. person of Boston*, whose good affection to his country in general, and spiritual relation to three of the judges in particular, has made him very solicitous and industrious in this matter; and I am fully persuaded, that, had his notions and proposals been hearkened to and followed, when these troubles were in their birth, in the ordinary way, they would never have grown unto that height which now they have. He has as yet met with little but unkindness, abuse, and reproach from many men; but I trust that in after times his wisdom and service will find a more universal acknowledgment; and if not, his reward is with the Lord." — *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, Vol. V. pp. 76, 77.

Who was this person? The editor has a note, "Supposed to be Mr. Willard." He doubtless based this opinion on the fact that three of the judges, Winthrop, Sewall, and Sergeant, were members of Mr. Willard's church (the Old South). We do not assert that this inference is not the correct one; but we venture to make some suggestions on this point. Samuel Willard had been mentioned by name on the preceding page, with Increase Mather and others, as opposing the proceedings at Salem. Having so recently commended him by name, why should Mr. Brattle speak of him again anonymously? Rich-

* Mass. Hist. Coll., Vol. V. pp. 74, 75.

ards was a member of Mr. Mather's church. Wait Winthrop and Stoughton were very intimate friends of Mr. Mather, and he had "spiritual relations" with them. Mr. Brattle does not say that these judges were members of the "Rev. person's" church. Stoughton, whose church relations were in Dorchester, was a "Mather man," and Mr. Upham would have his readers believe that Mr. Mather held his conscience and moulded his opinions.* To Wait Winthrop Mr. Mather inscribed his "Memorable Providences," 1689, "whom," he says, "I reckon among the best of my friends." Mr. Mather preached his funeral discourse, and composed his epitaph. Mr. Mather, we know, "was very solicitous and industrious in this matter," and was full of "notions and proposals, when these troubles were in their birth," which were not "hearkened to and followed." Mr. Willard, whose views were the same as Mr. Mather's, held his more quietly, and if he had "notions and proposals," we do not know what they were. The last sentence is particularly applicable to Mr. Mather; for while the executions were going on, he fell under the disapprobation of both parties, — of the more moderate party, because he had preached and written so zealously on the subject of Witchcraft as a theological question, and of the more violent party, because, when the trials and executions took place, he did not give them his support. If Mr. Mather is not alluded to in this paragraph, he is omitted altogether from the narrative, except as spiritual adviser of the persons condemned. It will seem very improbable to the accusers of Mr. Mather that he had no other connection with the proceedings.

Mr. Mather, Mr. Allen, Mr. Moody, Mr. Willard, Mr. Baily, and Mr. Morton acted as a unit in this whole matter. Five of them held prayer-meetings at the house of John Goodwin in 1688. Four of them commended and prefaced Mr. Mather's "Memorable Providences" in 1689. They approved and indorsed Increase Mather's "Cases of Conscience," in 1693; and Cotton Mather, Allen, Willard, and Morton, who were Fellows, set their names to "Certain Proposals made by the President and Fellows of Harvard College" in 1694, soliciting accounts, among other things illustrious and remarkable,

* History, Vol. II. p. 250.

of apparitions, possessions, enchantments, and all extraordinary things wherein the existence and agency of the invisible world are more sensibly demonstrated. Any statement, therefore, concerning the opinions and conduct of either of these clergymen in relation to witchcraft may be applied to them all.*

Mr. Joseph Willard, in the biography of his ancestor,† appropriates Mr. Brattle's commendation of "a Rev. person of Boston" to the benefit of that ancestor, without intimating that the allusion is anonymous. He says: "Mr. Willard early saw through the infatuation which was so thoroughly infused among the people, and by which almost every one else was blinded, — an infatuation, if not created, yet marvellously promoted, by Cotton Mather. He openly opposed it in public and private, he preached against it, and he wrote and published a pamphlet on the subject, entitled, 'Some Miscellany Observations respecting Witchcraft in a Dialogue between S. and B., 1692.'" If by the term "infatuation" he meant a belief in the reality of witchcraft, he was wrong in saying that his ancestor opposed it, as he was wrong in imputing to Cotton Mather the charge of "creating or marvellously promoting" that belief. Mr. Upham says,‡ "Mr. Willard signed the paper indorsing Deodat Lawson's famous sermon, which surely drove on the prosecutions," and seems to be wholly in the dark as to Mr. Willard's position, as much as he is of Increase Mather's. If he had read Mr. Willard's anonymous tract, his doubts would have been cleared up. Calef, in a letter to Mr. Willard, dated September 20, 1695, names "that late seasonable and well-designed Dialogue intituled, *Some Miscellany Observations*, &c., of which yourself is the supposed author, and which was so serviceable in the time of it,"§ and quotes from it. It is a quarto tract of sixteen pages. Its reproduction at this time would throw

* John Proctor and others, while awaiting trial, addressed a letter to "Mr. Mather, Mr. Allen, Mr. Moody, Mr. Willard, and Mr. Baily," asking them for their influence and sympathy." "Proctor," says Mr. Upham (History, Vol. II. p. 310), "addressed his letter to these persons because he believed them to be superior in wisdom and candid in spirit." He avoids giving Cotton Mather credit, by saying, "Of course Mr. Mather means Increase Mather." It is so evident, from the connection in which we habitually find the names of these clergymen, that Cotton Mather was the person addressed, that we deem it unnecessary to discuss the point.

† American Quarterly Register, Vol. XII. p. 113.

‡ History, Vol. II. p. 455.

§ More Wonders, p. 38.

more light upon the opinions of the New England clergy respecting witchcraft than any other document which has not been republished. It is written with great ability and logical acumen. The "S. and B." who carry on the dialogue may have been intended for Stoughton and Brattle, or Salem and Boston. "S." defends the theory of the magistrates, and "B." that of the clergy. We give a few extracts.

"*S.* I understand that you and many others are greatly dissatisfied at the proceedings among us, and have sought to obstruct them. Do you believe there are any witches?

"*B.* Yes, no doubt; the Scripture clear for it; and it is an injurious reflection that some of yours have cast upon us, as if we called that truth in question!

"*S.* Ought not, then, witches to be punished?

"*B.* Without question; the precept of God's word is for it; only they must first be so proved.

"*S.* But may not witches be so detected, as to be liable to a righteous sentence and execution?

"*B.* I believe it; though I think it is not so easy as some make it. Yet God often righteously leaves them to discover themselves.

"*S.* Ought not the civil magistrate to use the utmost diligence in the searching out witchcraft, when he is directed by God's providence to grounds of a just suspicion of it?

"*B.* Doubtless; yet ought he to manage the matter with great prudence and caution, and attend right rules of search."

["B." now becomes the questioner.]

"*B.* Taking it for granted that there are witches in New England, which no rational man will deny, I ask whether innocent persons may not be falsely accused of witchcraft?

"*S.* I verily believe it; and hope none of you suppose us so uncharitable as to think the contrary.

"*B.* Do you not think it a hard lot for an innocent person to have the aspersion of witchcraft cast upon him?

"*S.* Without scruple. There is no crime more scandalous and abominable, nor any that is with more difficulty wiped off.

"*B.* All of you are not so minded on my knowledge." [He then states at considerable length the outrageous and illegal methods pursued by the magistrates in committing a person accused]: "without bail, his credit stained, his liberty restrained, his time lost, and great charges and damages come upon him, which who shall repair?

"*S.* These things seem to have some weight in them; but I think them alien to our case. Please, then, to proceed.

"*B.* I believe them so not alien; but for the present let me ask: Do you think that a less clear evidence is sufficient for conviction in the case of witchcraft than is necessary in other capital cases, suppose murder?

"*S.* We suppose it necessary to take up with less; how else shall witches be detected and punished?

"*B.* This is a dangerous principle, and contrary to the mind of God, who hath appointed that there shall be good and clear proof against the criminal. Nor hath God excepted this case of witchcraft from the general rule. Besides, reason tells us, that, the more horrid the crime is, the more cautious we ought to be in making any guilty of it.

"*S.* But how, then, shall witches be detected and executed? Must the land groan under the burden of them, and is there no relief?

"*B.* Witches, as other criminals, are not to be executed till detected, nor are they detected till indubitably proved to be so; for which we are to use God's way, and wait His time." [He then quotes Perkins and Bernard, the authorities recommended by the ministers in their Advice.]

"*S.* You seem to be very nice and critical on this point.

"*B.* And why not? there is life in the case; besides a perpetual infamy on the person, and a ruinous reproach upon his family."

[They then take up spectral testimony, the credibility of confessed witches, and other evidence received at the Salem trials, which "B." subjects to the keenest criticism and most scathing condemnation.]

As evidence to support his charge, that Mr. Mather endeavored to get up at Boston, in the case of Margaret Rule, a repetition of the Salem proceedings, Mr. Upham * produces a letter from Mr. Mather to Stephen Sewall, clerk of the courts at Salem, dated September 20, 1692. This letter he first printed in the Appendix to the second edition of his Lectures, 1832. He has had thirty-five years to reflect upon it, and reprints it in the same connection in his History. Mr. Mather, commissioned by the Governor to prepare an account of some of the Salem trials, wrote to the clerk of the courts, as he had attended none of the trials himself, for "a narrative of the evidences given in at the trials of half a dozen, or, if you please, a dozen, of the principal witches that have been condemned." The clerk doubtless furnished the evidence, and it may be read (we know not what portion of it is the clerk's and what is Mr.

* History, Vol. II. p. 487.

Mather's) in "Wonders of the Invisible World." Mr. Mather, we may infer from his mode of addressing him, "My dear and my very obliging Stephen," was an intimate friend, which will account for the free and somewhat obscure expressions in the letter. This is the passage on which Mr. Upham bases his accusation: "I am willing, that, when you write, you should imagine me as obstinate a Sadducee and witch-advocate as any among us. Address me as one that believed nothing reasonable; and when you have so knocked me down. in a spectre so unlike me, you will enable me to box it [not the narrative of witch stories, but the fallen spectre of Sadduceeism] about among my neighbors, till it [the spectre] come, I know not where at last." "Such," says Professor Enoch Pond, "is the strict, proper, grammatical meaning of the sentence, and is very different from the forced and perverted meaning which the accusers of Mr. Mather have put upon it. I am astonished that learned gentlemen should have so blundered upon it." * Mr. Peabody and Mr. Bancroft have followed Mr. Upham in his misinterpretation of the letter, who says: "He did box it [the narrative of witch stories] about so effectually among his neighbors that he succeeded that next summer in getting up a wonderful case of witchcraft in the person of one Margaret Rule." Mr. Upham makes this charge respecting the case of Margaret Rule without a particle of evidence to sustain it. Mr. Mather cannot in any way be connected with the origin of this case; and instead of making any excitement or getting up any prosecutions in the matter, he cautioned the sufferer not to give the names of any persons whose spectres might appear to her. He prayed with her, as he did with the Goodwin children; she recovered, and the affair passed off without injury to the life or reputation of any one.

Mr. Upham has devoted considerable space to the case of George Burroughs, — in our view, the most lamentable of all the Salem murders, but regarded at the time, even by moderate men, as the case in which the charge of confederacy with the Devil was best substantiated. Increase Mather — who thought that these Salem "methods will utterly ruin and undo poor New England," and who reproved a person coming

* The Mather Family, pp. 134, 135.

to Salem to consult about his child, asking him "whether there was not a God in Boston, that he should go to the Devil at Salem for advice" * — said: "I was not myself present at any of the trials, excepting one, viz., that of George Burroughs. Had I been one of his judges, I could not have acquitted him." † Cotton Mather, and doubtless all the clergy, had the same feeling. "Glad should I have been," said he, "if I had never known the name of this man." The reader of Mr. Upham's History will not find there the evidence which produced such an impression on the minds of the contemporaries of Burroughs, further than that he was a little man, and had performed great feats of strength. Mr. Peabody ‡ says there was no other testimony against him than feats of bodily strength. The report of Burroughs's trial is in print in Mather's "Wonders," and in Calef's "More Wonders," and even Hutchinson, from whom Mr. Upham takes his account, records other evidence, — that he, having been twice married, treated his wives harshly, and that he pretended to know what had been said to them in his absence. He persuaded them to swear that they would not reveal his secrets. They had privately complained to their neighbors that their house was haunted. The brother of one of the wives swore, that, going out after strawberries, Burroughs, on their return, went into the bushes on foot, and although they rode at a quick pace, they found him with them when near home; "that he then fell to chiding his wife for talking to her brother about him, saying that he knew their thoughts, which the brother said it was more than the Devil knew; to which Burroughs replied, that his God told him." There was no "spectral evidence" in this testimony. Mr. Upham, instead of giving what is so necessary for explaining the case of Burroughs, supplies its place by some very grave and unsupported charges against the honesty of Cotton Mather, who printed the only contemporaneous account of the proceedings, which Calef copied. He says: § "Neither Hutchinson nor Calef seems to have noticed one remarkable fact: many of the depositions, how many we cannot tell, were procured after the trials were over, and surreptitiously foisted in among

* Brattle, p. 71.
† Cases of Conscience, Postscript.
‡ Life of Cotton Mather, p. 228.
§ History, Vol. II. p. 297.

the papers to bolster up the proceedings." "This," he remarks, "stamps the management of the prosecutions, and of those concerned in the charge of the papers, with an irregularity of the grossest kind, which partakes strongly of the character of fraud and falsehood. . . . . The persons who had brought Mr. Burroughs to his death concluded that their best escape from public indignation was to accumulate evidence against him; . . . . and Cotton Mather, feeling the importance of making the most of Mr. Burroughs's extraordinary strength, ... said: 'Yea, there were two testimonies that George Burroughs, with only putting the forefinger of his right hand into the muzzle of a heavy gun, a fowling-piece of about six or seven foot barrel, did lift up the gun, and hold it out at arm's end.'"* This evidence was, indeed, taken after Burroughs's trial and execution; but it was not *surreptitiously foisted in* among the papers, by "an irregularity which partakes of the character of fraud and falsehood"; and Mr. Upham should have discovered this fact. Mr. Mather puts this testimony within brackets, in a paragraph by itself, and says:† "One of those witnesses was over-persuaded by some persons to be out of the way at G. B.'s trial; but he came afterwards, with sorrow for his withdrawal, and gave in his testimony. *Nor were either of these witnesses made use of as evidence in the trial.*" Mr. Upham probably did not observe the brackets, or the concluding part of the quotation, which wholly relieves Mr. Mather from the groundless charge here made against his integrity.

It seems hardly necessary to continue this examination, and yet our stock of material is far from being exhausted. We might have made our citations from other writers; but we have quoted chiefly from Mr. Upham's books, because he is the earliest, and is regarded as the most reliable authority on the subject of Salem Witchcraft. Mr. Peabody, who adopted Mr. Upham's view of Mr. Mather's connection with the Salem trials, seemed to appreciate the utter incompatibility between this and other portions of Mr. Mather's life, and says:‡ "It would be gratifying to see these things explained in any way creditable to his fame." Such an explanation we have at-

* History, Vol. II. pp. 298-300.

† Wonders, p. 64.

‡ Life of Cotton Mather, p. 257.

tempted; and if Mr. Peabody were living, we are sure that no one would welcome more cordially a vindication of Mr. Mather's reputation.

It is amusing to see with what flippancy the newspaper critics have assailed Mr. Longfellow's "Giles Corey of the Salem Farms." His Cotton Mather is not a bloodthirsty fanatic, but is a warning Mentor to the magistrates, and an angel of mercy to the accused. To Hathorne, the magistrate, he says: —

> "May not the Devil take the outward shape
> Of innocent persons? Are we not in danger,
> Perhaps, of punishing some who are not guilty?"

To Mary Walcott, one of the "afflicted" girls, he says: —

> "Dear child, be comforted!
> Only by prayer and fasting can you drive
> These unclean spirits from you. An old man
> Gives you his blessing. God be with you, Mary!"

Mr. Mather and Mr. Hathorne stand over the dead body of Giles Corey. The latter says: —

> "This is the Potter's Field. Behold the fate
> Of those who deal in Witchcrafts, and, when questioned,
> Refuse to plead their guilt or innocence,
> And stubbornly drag death upon themselves."

Mr. Mather replies: —

> "O sight most horrible! In a land like this,
> Spangled with Churches Evangelical,
> Inwrapped in our salvations, must we seek
> In mouldering statute-books of English Courts
> Some old forgotten Law, to do such deeds?
> Those who lie buried in the Potter's Field
> Will rise again, as surely as ourselves
> That sleep in honored graves with Epitaphs;
> And this poor man, whom we have made a victim,
> Hereafter will be counted as a martyr!"

This view of Mr. Mather's principles and bearing during the witch trials is historically the correct one, although Mr. Longfellow has varied some of the minor incidents. Mr. Mather never attended any examination at Salem, and, being but twenty-nine years of age, was hardly "an old man." He

might, however, cite both Mr. Upham and Mr. Peabody for the latter statement. Mr. Longfellow's critics have said that he has represented Mr. Mather as doubting and hesitating in these proceedings. This was precisely Mr. Mather's position, and it is no little credit to the poet that he should have discovered it, when this simple truth has been withheld from the historians. Mr. Mather believed in witchcraft, but disbelieved in the Salem methods of dealing with it. Mr. Longfellow's opinions have evidently been formed, not from the modern histories, but by a study of the original authorities. His poem breathes the very spirit of 1692, and many of its expressions are borrowed from the books and tracts of that period. "Spangled with Churches Evangelical" is from "Wonders of the Invisible World" (p. 6), and "Inwrapped in our salvations" is from the same (p. 17).

Rev. R. H. Allen, in his neat volume, "The New England Tragedies in Prose," has given a sketch of the historical events on which Mr. Longfellow has founded his "New England Tragedies," and it is an appropriate explanatory accompaniment to the poems.

The article on "Salem Witchcraft," in the "Edinburgh Review" for July, 1868, is based on Mr. Upham's History, and is a curious medley of historical errors, of which the following will serve as a specimen: "The settlement had its birth in 1620, the date of the charter granted by James I. to the 'Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay in New England'" (p. 6). Cotton Mather uniformly appears as the confederate of Parris and Noyes. "It remained for Mr. Noyes and the Mathers and Mr. Parris to endure the popular hatred" (p. 33). "Mather, Noyes, and Parris had no idea that these eight executions would be the last" (p. 34). "Cotton Mather was nimble and triumphant on the Witches' Hill, whenever there were firebrands of Hell swinging there" (p. 33). "Cotton Mather was the survivor of the other two. He died in 1728, and was never happy again after that last batch of executions" (p. 37). These are evidently the impressions which one unfamiliar with the subject will derive from Mr. Upham's work. It is not simply the positive assertions, but the allusions with which his writings abound, that convey these impressions.

"Mr. Noyes and all his fellow-persecutors," * and "Mr. Noyes more than any other [not *person*, but] *inhabitant of the town* was responsible for the blood that was shed," † the reader regards as allusions to Cotton Mather.

The History of Salem Witchcraft is as yet unwritten. Mr. Upham's works must be regarded only as affording materials for such a history, — and there are other materials, as we have seen, which he has not used. The subject can be treated, moreover, in a more compact form than his two bulky volumes. Much of the matter in his first volume, though interesting, and showing great industry on the part of himself and his sons, belongs rather to the local history of Salem Village, now Danvers, than to a special work on Salem Witchcraft. We make these suggestions in the hope that Mr. Upham will give us a compact manual on the subject, revising his opinions where he deems them unsound, putting his materials into a more concise form and with a more orderly arrangement, dividing his work into chapters with headings, and by all means giving references to authorities when he quotes. No one is so competent as he to do this work, and there could not be a more acceptable contribution to New England history.

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* History, Vol. II. p. 344.

† Ibid., p. 254.